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TWO LILIES

Julia Kavanagh

TWO LILIES.

VOL. I.

RIEN,"

LISHERS,
ET.

TWO LILIES

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "JOHN DORRIEN,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TWO LILIES.

CHAPTER I.

A DRIZZLING rain fell and made the pavement of the Strand dark and slippery; the gaslights burned redly in the fog that came from the river; the September evening wore a most unfriendly aspect, yet Edward Graham walked briskly with his hands in his pockets, whistling softly to himself as pleased as a schoolboy out on a holiday. He had just received the quarterly amount of his one hundred a year, and of these twenty-five pounds which had not been an hour in his possession, he was going to spend ten on the purchase of a book. A rare book was this, a wonderful book, not to be found in the British Museum, and which, though modern, was a scarce book, of

TWO LILIES.

VOL. I.

monds. No; if the book was gone, there was no remedy for it. Edward Graham had seen it once for half an hour on the table of Sir Edmund Shrievewell, but everyone knew that the great architect was the closest and stingiest of mortals in imparting knowledge. Sir Edmund was the man of all others to keep De Renneville in his library safe under lock and key for ever.

"No," thought Edward Graham, with his hand on the door of Mr. Clement's shop, "if it is gone, I must think no more about it; I must forget it as if I had never seen it, or the book will only set me astray, and instead of working or thinking for myself, I shall always be dreaming of what I could have done if I had had it; just like poor Long, who never recovered the loss of his thousand pounds. If I had that thousand pounds, you know, I could do this or that, and so, instead of setting himself to earn a thousand pounds like a man, and letting bygones be bygones, he took to drinking."

"And is that Edward Graham?" said a cheery voice behind the young architect, whilst a hand was placed with careless familiarity on his shoulder.

Mr. Graham turned round rather sharply.

He was a sensitive man, also a proud one. Familiarity under any aspect was odious to him. Moreover, he entertained a special dislike for the owner of that cheery voice; so, as we said, he turned round rather sharply, and though his manner was courteous, it was decidedly cool, as he replied:

"How do you do, Cowper?"

"Oh! excellently well, of course. I am going off to Gaul by the tidal boat. Will you join me?"

"Are you going now?"

"This moment."

"Why, where is your luggage?"

"Confound the luggage!" replied Mr. Cowper, with gay heartiness. "I send it off to the station beforehand, and never set my eyes on it again till it has passed through the Custom-house."

Mr. Cowper's appearance did not belie the easy philosophy implied by this declaration. He was a gentlemanlike-looking young man, with a *debonnair* manner which few people could resist. Of these few Edward Graham was one. That beaming countenance and pleasant voice both inspired him with a sort of superstitious horror. A large share of Italian blood flowed

in his veins, and he had an Italian's secret belief in and abhorrence of the evil eye. That gay-looking, fair-haired, blue-eyed Mr. Cowper, who now stood before him, detaining him at the door of Mr. Clement's shop, with his hand impatiently stretched out to open it, had played the part of Gettatore in Edward Graham's life. Whenever they had met, trouble had infallibly been at hand, and with involuntary nervousness the young architect now thought: "Cowper has turned up, the book is sure to be gone."

"And where do you perch now?" asked Mr. Cowper, with that total want of ceremony which characterized his address. "In the old tree at Chelsea?"

"I still live in the same place," coldly answered Edward Graham.

The words were scarcely uttered when Mr. Cowper hailed an empty hansom cab passing by, and jumping into it with a careless "*Au revoir,* old fellow," vanished in a moment.

With a sigh of relief, Edward Graham entered the shop. A look told him that the book, his book, was still there.

"Good evening, Mr. Clement," he said, addressing a neat little man, who stood as straight

as a Chinese figure behind the counter. "Have you still got De Renneville?"

Mr. Clement was somewhat tired of the question, which, under various insidious forms, this young man had been putting to him for the last six months, so it was rather shortly that he replied:

"Yes, sir, I have got De Renneville."

"May I look at it?"

Mr. Clement took down the quarto and placed it on the counter without uttering a word.

With sparkling eyes and eager hand, Edward Graham opened the volume. He looked at the frontispiece, counted the plates with scrupulous attention, closed the book, examined the binding, then, putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a little bundle of five-pound notes, and placing two on the counter, he said, with seeming composure,

"I believe that is your price, Mr. Clement?"

"Yes, sir, it is," answered Mr. Clement, somewhat surprised at this unexpected conclusion. "Won't you have the book sent, sir?"

"Thank you, there is no need," replied Edward Graham, and he walked out of the shop

with the long-coveted volume under his arm, in all the triumphant exultation of a desire fulfilled.

Philosophers may preach and practise (but they do not), they may say what they please about the wisdom of indifference to all mere mortal pleasures, there is nothing in this world like wishing, and getting the thing wished for. The longing may be painful and wearisome, the joy when won may not last, but to wish is to live, spite the doom of death hanging over us, and to win is the one glimpse of Paradise that was left to man after his bitter loss.

When Edward Graham reached Chelsea, entered his bachelor's front parlour, where a bright coal fire was burning in the grate, and the tea-tray was waiting for him on the table; when he drew his arm-chair in front of the hearth, and sinking down into it, opened his book with the greed of a miser counting his gold, he uttered aloud an emphatic "At last!" which came from the depths of his heart.

At first Mr. Graham's countenance, as he bent over the open book on his knee, expressed only the triumphant gladness of a man who has just achieved a long cherished purpose, but gradually that meaning faded away; his hand

no longer turned over page after page in eager haste, but lingered over one for ten minutes at a time and more, and the most entire meditations and the closest attention were written in the strong lines of his Italian face. It was thoroughly Italian in complexion and character, and it had the noble though rather heavy Roman type. Edward Graham was the son of a lovely Italian girl whom a Scotch gentleman of ancient descent, but scanty means, had married for her delicate beauty. This she had not transmitted to the young man. He was tall, more strongly built than are most men of twenty-five, and not handsome, but from some Roman ancestor or other of his he had certainly derived the aquiline cast of his features, the ease and dignity of his carriage, and that impressive gravity of aspect which made even those who passed him by in the street feel that he was a remarkable-looking man.

The inner man did not belie the outward one in Edward Graham. The patience of great strength, mental and physical, its careless dignity and quiet fortitude, were his. He had also the steady ambition of those old Romans who set no other limits to the power of their race than those of the world, and who, whilst

living for their own generation, yet laboured for eternity. Solidity was his characteristic; his very imagination was subordinate to this great law of his nature. It was warm and powerful, but was rarely allowed to lead its master astray. He never undertook what he could not accomplish, and he neither over nor underrated his power of accomplishing it. Thus the simplest things which he did were well done, and everything that he aimed at was worth the effort he made to attain it. Mr. Edward Graham was very careful of his money, perhaps because his father was a Scotchman, and that blood is strong, perhaps also because he was honourable and poor; but he had spent ten pounds ungrudgingly and deliberately on the book now in his hands, and even though that purchase should never bring him in the return of one shilling in his professional career, he was not the man to regret it.

He was an architect, a poor unknown architect as yet, but he had determined that to renovate, so far as this may lie in one man's power, the domestic architecture of England should be the object of his ambition; and for the last five years every moment of his leisure, every shilling

he could spare, had been devoted steadily and patiently to that aim. He had travelled in every direction sixty miles around London searching for and studying ancient mansions. He had found them in the spots where they still linger—some on the banks of quiet streams that glide by them with a low murmur like the song of Time; others embosomed in the green shade of ancestral trees and dreaming life away there like the sleeping beauty in the wood; others again rising quaint, tall and strong, with meaner dwellings clustered around them, dwellings of mushroom growth, that had come there as if for shelter and protection. And how well he knew them, these old mediæval abbeys, with their quiet cloisters, these Elizabethan abodes of red brick embrowned by time, these bare-looking but roomy old houses of the days of Queen Anne, with their formal Dutch gardens—how he had visited and studied them all. Books and prints had made him almost equally familiar with habitations more remote, and he had spent days in the reading-room of the British Museum, to master in all its minutiæ the external aspect and internal economy of a dwelling he never expected to see. The same amount of study and time he

had bestowed, so far as in his power lay, on foreign domestic architecture, old and modern. He knew every celebrated house of Pompeii by heart. He preferred that of Pansa to the house of Diomedes, and the house of the Faun he liked best of all. With grand old Roman palaces and stately French châteaux and hôtels he also had acquaintance, though more remote; and of all the valuable information thus acquired, not one-tenth he knew would ever avail him. It mattered very little to Edward Graham; for that one-tenth he was willing to toil, and would have scorned himself could he have grudged the cost.

The volume now lying on his knee was the very book for a man of such a temper. It gave a clear and plain account of every habitation of wood and stone which time had spared in that most Norman of Norman towns, Saint Aubin. The old fourteenth and fifteenth century houses of wood, with their projecting fronts, gable ends, and carved beams, were considered at full length. The grave stone mansions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were no less minutely described; and there was a whole chapter, with numerous illustrations, upon the

vanes which still decorated the roofs of these ancient dwellings.

Now, Mr. Graham had a special weakness for vanes, and his mind fired to see those of Saint Aubin, as represented in the series of plates before him. These vanes in no manner resembled the straight, stiff gilt rods we see now-a-days. One was in the shape of a sword-like spike tapering gently out of the roof. Four laughing heads peeped out from between graceful scrolls; bell-like flowers, with their leaves, drooped from the blade of the sword, the tips of which closed with acanthus-looking foliage. Another vane, evidently not mediæval, showed Cupids and vases of flowers in alternate rows; and a third, a straight, tall stem, only bore pine cones on its branches. But, fascinating though these vanes were, what were they to the Hôtel de Saint Aubin, the gem of the town and of the book, as it appeared in three large plates! The first plate gave a view of the court, round which the hotel, an elegant little structure, was built. Only one of the two octagonal turrets which had formerly flanked it remained, but this was covered with basso-relievos representing rural scenes, to a separate representation of which,

as well as of other basso-relievos on a lowgallery enclosing one side of the court, the two other plates were devoted. The sculptured ornaments of that gallery were remarkable, and they interested Edward Graham very deeply. They represented the meeting of Henry VIII. of England and of Francis I. of France, as they were proceeding to the great pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

The English came out of Guines, the French from Ardres. A pompous cavalcade of prelates, cross-bearers, pages, and esquires followed each monarch. The two kings met in the centre.

"Ay, there are Henry's leopards on the housings of his charger," thought Edward Graham, "and these are the lilies of Francis."

So wrapt was Mr. Graham in the contemplation of this bygone pageantry that he never heard a double knock at the street door which the sound of a car passing by helped to drown. He roused himself, however, with a start as the door of his front parlour suddenly opened, and a foolish-looking, untidy maid-servant put in her head, and said, with a startled look—

"Oh! please, sir, there's a gentleman!"

And she spoke in a tone which implied that

evening visitors were not frequently seen in Mr. Graham's front parlour.

"Never mind showing me in, my good girl," said a cheerful voice; and gently pushing her aside, Mr. Cowper entered the room, and laughed gaily at Edward Graham's look of surprise.

CHAPTER II.

"YOU certainly did not expect to see me, did you, now?" remarked Mr. Cowper, as he came forward.

"You missed the train," replied Edward Graham, closing his book with a smile.

"My dear fellow," airily answered Mr. Cowper, sinking down into a chair by the fire. "You speak with a sagacity which the divine Ulysses might envy—only you are wrong. The train is in fault—not I. There has been an accident, and I cannot leave before to-morrow morning. So I have come round to you in the hope of persuading you into accompanying me. I suppose that shake of the head means 'No.' My dear Graham, allow me to prove to you that your obstinacy is most deplorable. Ever since swallows established the fundamental law of migration, man has, in a greater or a less degree, followed the example set by these in-

telligent birds. Savages go from one hunting ground, or from one island to another, as they happen to be continental or insular savages; and civilized man has his excursion trains, which run at certain times of the year, according to custom and climate. Now, the French coast is a very favourite hunting-ground with the real Londoner; only he *will* colonize, which is a pity. But, spite that drawback, I consider Saint Aubin as pleasant a little town as you——"

"Saint Aubin!" interrupted Edward Graham with involuntary surprise; "it is there you are going?"

"To the very place," answered Mr. Cowper with unmoved composure. "I have an uncle there, and I am going to pay him a flying visit."

Edward Graham had known Mr. Cowper all his life, but he had never known before this moment that Mr. Cowper had an uncle in or out of France. He looked delightfully open, charmingly frank and easy, but new traits in his history were always coming out after this sudden fashion, startling even the most unobservant amongst his intimate friends into the unpleasant conviction that they knew little or nothing about Mr. Cowper after all.

"Do you know this?" asked Edward Graham, pushing De Renneville's volume towards him.

"Oh, yes, quite well," replied Mr. Cowper, merely glancing at the book, then looking once more at the fire; "the author kindly gave me a copy—I fancy by the way that I left it at my uncle's—he is dead, poor fellow. He was a shy little man—rather a clever book, is it not?"

"Very clever and especially suggestive," replied Mr. Graham, giving the fire a thrust of the poker which, if translated into speech, would have run thus: "That fellow knows everyone and everything, and has every luck in life, I do believe. Perhaps I ought to have gone to Saint Aubin and not bought De Renneville —but no, that would not have done. Saint Aubin must be for next year."

"Oh! very suggestive, of course," rejoined Mr. Cowper in his airy fluent way; "full of meaning to you, especially, I should say; but then there is a meaning in everything, if we but knew it. There was a meaning even in the famous grey coat which Napoleon wore at Austerlitz. It was chosen grey, I believe, that the dust and smoke of battle might not tell upon it. I remember liking De Renneville's book. I wonder you do not run over just to

look at Mr. Bertram's house. It is the great show-place of Saint Aubin, and quite the thing for you."

"I suppose you mean the Hôtel de Saint Aubin, with a turret and basso-relievos, all about the Field of the Cloth of Gold," said Edward Graham, his black eyes sparkling with animation.

"Yes; the very same. Mr. Bertram is rather weak about that Field of the Cloth of Gold. It seems that one of his ancestors figures in King Henry's suite, and for so perfect a gentleman as he is, he talks rather more of that circumstance than is needful."

"Is the place his?" asked Mr. Graham, still eager and interested.

"No; it belongs, in point of fact, to his little girl. Her great-grandfather was French, a fisherman, or a drysalter, or something of the kind, who bought the place for a song in the great Revolution. His son, Mr. Bertram's father-in-law, appointed my uncle her guardian, but her father lives in the house, of course. It is anything but a convenient one within, however charming it may be without. Mr. Bertram raves about it, however; but then, being the last of the Bertrams, I suppose he has a right

to rave about these old-fashioned things."

"Why, who are the Bertrams?" asked Edward Graham, throwing back his head in half real, half scornful surprise.

"What! You never heard of the Bertrams—the Gerald or Geraldine Bertrams, one of the great old, old English Catholic families! My dear Graham, even the little bare-footed boys who run about Saint Aubin worrying one for sous, know all about the Bertrams. The late Mr. Bertram died there, and was buried in the famous old abbey outside Saint Aubin, and his son was reared in Saint Aubin, and married one of the Saint Aubin girls, and is one of the magnates of the place, and undoubtedly the acknowledged head of the English colony, by whom he is all but worshipped, partly because he is one of the handsomest of men, and partly because he is one of that aristocracy which John Bull adores, as only John Bull can adore when he sets about it. So now have I tempted you to go to Saint Aubin?"

"No," almost shortly replied Edward Graham. It was hard not to be able to afford going to the place he most longed to visit, and to see that easy good-for-nothing Richard Cowper, who lived no one knew how, doing it without

effort, was still harder; but to be asked to allow himself to be tempted was not endurable.

"I never saw such an inexorable fellow," said Mr. Cowper gaily; "that 'no' was uttered with a sternness worthy of your Roman ancestors, Graham, and yet Miss Lily Scot, the belle of the English colony of Saint Aubin, is a sort of connection of yours. I am sure I have heard her talk of a godmother of hers, who must be your aunt Mrs. Graham."

"My aunt's god-daughter does reside in Saint Aubin," quietly replied Edward Graham; "but my aunt has never seen her, nor has she been there."

"Ergo, you will not go; your logic is unanswerable."

Mr. Cowper looked very much amused, and Mr. Graham felt proportionately irritated. A hundred times before these two men had been on the extreme verge of a breach, which the strong aversion on Mr. Graham's side would have rendered irreparable, slight though the motive which might have caused it always was, but every time something or some one had prevented the catastrophe. The *Deus ex machinâ* now came under the shape of a loud and very peculiar double-knock.

"A visitor for you, of course," remarked Mr. Cowper, with his easy smile.

Yes, it was a visitor for Mr. Graham, who recognised his aunt's double-knock, and foresaw with some annoyance that Mr. Cowper, instead of shortening, would assuredly lengthen his visit; but he was too hospitable, after all, to indulge such feelings, and subduing them at once, he said:

"We were speaking of my aunt; here she is, come to give you a message for that beautiful Saint Aubin god-daughter of hers."

"I shall be delighted to bear any tender message to the lovely Lily Scot," gaily replied Mr. Cowper. "I have a great weakness for that young lady, and I believe she knows it."

He had scarcely ceased speaking, when the parlour door opened, and the servant girl showed in this time, without any signs of surprise, an old lady in a great poke bonnet, beneath which appeared a bright face, which, though framed with locks of snow-white hair, was fresh in colour and open in expression as that of a child.

"Edward," she said from the door, and walking hastily towards him as she spoke, "I am in a mess, so I have come all the way from

Hammersmith for you to get me out of it. Mr. Cowper, is that you? Why, I have not seen you this age! It must be seven years."

"It is indeed," replied Mr. Cowper, throwing a shade of melancholy on his cheerful face, and doing it very successfully, considering the shortness of the notice (but then he was accustomed to look everything he pleased). "I have, however, had compensation in hearing frequently about you through your god-daughter, Miss Scot."

Now this pretty little speech was charmingly delivered, but scarcely hearing it to the end, and not seeming to give it the least attention, Mrs. Graham, eagerly fastening a pair of blue eyes, which were still bright and expressive, full on Mr. Cowper's face as he stood before her smiling, easy, and courteous, put this most irrelevant and certainly unexpected of questions: "Are you fond of birds?" and before the young man could give either assent or denial to so comprehensive an interrogation, Mrs. Graham opened her shawl, and placed on the table a small cage, in which two very small birds, with very pink bills and claws, were perched side by side in a little hoop.

"Here they are," said Mrs. Graham. "You

can take them away with you, if you like; for," she added, with the most engaging candour, "*I* don't know what to do with them."

Mr. Cowper was never discomposed, so it was with perfect ease of look and manner that he replied—

"You are most kind, but I should be sorry to rob my friend Edward Graham, for whom these two little darlings are evidently meant."

"Bless you! he does not care about birds," interrupted Mrs. Graham.

"Besides," continued Mr. Cowper, without heeding the interruption, "I am leaving town."

"Are you going to Saint Aubin?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, and before he could answer, she continued—"because, if so, you can take them, birds, cage, and all, to Lily."

This time Mr. Cowper did look disturbed for one second; then rallying, he submitted with a smile and a bow, and a "most happy," which was as sincere as most such "most happys" are.

Mrs. Graham sank down on a chair with a sigh of evident relief, and, covering the cage with her pocket-handkerchief, she exclaimed—

"Well, Mr. Cowper, I am so glad, you can't imagine what a weight is taken from my mind."

Mr. Cowper bowed again, and again was most happy; whilst Edward Graham, an amused and silent listener till then, now said, as he rang the bell,

"Come, auntie, take off your bonnet, and have a cup of tea."

"Well, I do think I will, my dear boy," replied Mrs. Graham, untying her bonnet strings, tossing her bonnet on a chair, and taking from her pocket a very limp cap, which she at once placed on her head. "These birds have made me thirsty, I believe. You see, they belonged to a poor foreign lady, a neighbour of mine, who died a week ago in Hammersmith, leaving these little wretches unprovided for. I took them in, and, you may believe me, I have not had a night's rest since they came to the house; for I have a cat, and Mrs. Johnson has a cat, and I do believe that all the cats in Hammersmith come to our garden. And then they look chilly, the mites of things, so I had a fire for them, lest they should be starved. Yet they are great bathers," she added, looking at Mr. Cowper, and addressing him as the temporary guardian of her *protégés;* "and you need give them no chickweed, only a little salad, and

seed, of course, and plenty of water—they are not at all troublesome."

"But you had a bird formerly," said Mr. Cowper—"I remember him quite well, a very yellow canary, called Tommy—what has become of him?"

"He was called Tommy, and he was very yellow," said Mrs. Graham, with a sudden brightness, that passed like light over her whole countenance, "but he is dead, dead and buried," she resumed, in an altered tone—"you would never guess where, Mr. Cowper—in Kensal Green! He was my daughter's bird, you know," she added, with a little quivering of her nether lip, in which age as well as emotion had a part "and I thought I could bury him in her grave. Birds will go to cemeteries and build their nests there, and sing there too, as I have often heard them, so why should they not be buried there?"

She looked at her nephew and his visitor with a half-asserting, half-questioning look—a look of mingled earnestness and simplicity strange in a woman of her years—a woman, too, who had a broad forehead, and in whose eyes sparkled plenty of shrewdness. Different as were the two men who heard her, they both felt the charm of that fresh, simple nature, and

they both smiled; but to his smile Edward Graham added a comment:

"Aunt, here is your tea; and you like it hot."

"So I do, you good boy."

He poured her out a cup, she raised it to her lips, then put it down again, with startling suddenness, and exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Mr. Cowper, you must not give them one grain of hemp-seed, or they'll die—two bird-fanciers have told me so. And mind you tell Lily Scot. And I declare I have got her photograph in my pocket, and surely you can tell me whether it is like or not."

So saying, Mrs. Graham produced an envelope, whence she drew forth the image of the fair Lily Scot, which she handed at once to Mr. Cowper. He took it, gave it a long, complacent look, then returned it, saying:

"Very like indeed, but not half so charming as the original."

Mr. Graham took the photograph from his aunt's hand, and looked at it with the pleased attention which none save the most hard-hearted of men can deny to the image of youth and beauty. Photographs are no flatterers. This one, then, might be believed when it

showed a delicate, refined face, with pencilled eyebrows, soft deep eyes, and an aspect of gentle seriousness.

"Is she dark or fair?" asked Edward Graham.

"Both," replied Mr. Cowper; "for she has raven hair and a lily skin. Her eyes are dark, of course, and her figure, as you can see, is charming; and altogether Miss Lily Scot is quite worthy of being the belle of Saint Aubin."

"I am sure she is lovely," said Mrs. Graham, with a beaming face—"much prettier than my friend Laura ever was. You remember Mrs. Fay, Ned, don't you? Did you think her so lovely?"

"I had a glimpse once of a lady of sixty, auntie," he answered, with a smile, "and she was not lovely."

Mrs. Graham looked disconcerted, then said, deprecatingly,

"Well, of course poor Laura did get old, and yet the world did rave about her."

"Mrs. Fay is rich," said Mr. Cowper, smiling.

"And do you know her?" cried Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows. "But to be sure," she added, correcting herself, "there is no reason why you should not."

Yes, Mr. Cowper did know Mrs. Fay, and he knew Mrs. Fay's house, too—the old abbey of Saint Olave's.

"A rare old place!" Edward Graham could not help remarking. Then, in answer to his aunt's look, "I was down there the other day," he said carelessly. "I took a sketch of the abbey—sadly in want of repair, it seems to me."

"Yes," hotly cried Mrs. Graham, "and it is a shame of Laura not to have given you that job, Edward. And she was impertinent, too, when I mentioned it, and poopoohed me quite rudely, as I told you at the time. And she is so rich!"

Mrs. Graham's nephew tried to laugh, but his olive cheek flushed at the good lady's unnecessary frankness. It was trying, to say the least of it, that Mrs. Graham should have chosen to speak thus in the presence of Mr. Cowper, whom he (Edward Graham) liked so little. And yet the young man showed the most perfect and good-humoured tact. He quietly glided away from the subject of Mrs. Laura Fay into the more congenial theme of Lily Scot; and having lingered upon this long enough for Mrs. Graham to forget her friend's unkindness, he rose and took his leave.

"Mind you bid Lily Scot give them no hemp-seed," was Mrs. Graham's adieu; "and please to tell her that I shall write to her as soon as I have time, but that if she wants me to see her before I die, she must come to Hammersmith, as I have no fancy to cross the sea."

Mr. Cowper promised to deliver this message, and taking up the cage with a look of grave responsibility, he departed.

"You have got some luggage after all," Edward Graham could not help saying.

"Oh! I grudge no trouble taken for the lovely Lily Scot," was Mr. Cowper's gallant answer.

"I hope he will be careful of them!" said Mrs. Graham, as the street door closed on Mr. Cowper and the birds.

"Yes, auntie, he will; he is going to Saint Aubin, and he has Miss Lily Scot to please," was Edward Graham's dry answer, which, developed, would have meant that Mr. Cowper was not the man to do even a slight kindness without having some personal object in view.

But Mrs. Graham, too simple-minded to understand, said warmly,

"He is a dear good boy. I am glad you have got such a friend, Ned."

Edward Graham's face darkened.

"Dick Cowper is no friend of mine, aunt," he said, decisively.

Mrs. Graham's blue eyes expressed sincere wonder.

"Dear me! I thought you were bosom friends," she said, innocently.

"No, auntie, we are not."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose.

"And what has he done?" she asked, with naïve curiosity.

But Mr. Graham was not one who proclaimed his wrongs. For seven years and more he had been silent, and he was resolved never to assert that which it was impossible for him to prove, and which, whether proved or not, was irreparable.

"Auntie, I had better not talk about it to you," he said, quietly. "We were boys both of us, and something occurred which alienated me from Dick Cowper for ever; but, as I say, we were lads. To my own resentment I keep true, but I will not visit the sin of the boy upon the man by telling it again, even to you."

"Well, I suppose you are right," answered his aunt, though she looked rather disappointed; "but I hope he will take the birds safely. I

know Lily Scot will be kind to them, little mites of things. Their mistress thought so much of them, poor soul! I am sure Lily will be kind to them. She is a dear girl, and her mother writes that she is so clever and natty about the house, making the most of everything, cutting out, sewing, trimming, for the whole of them, and always well dressed."

"An invaluable accomplishment," remarked Edward Graham, smiling.

"I wish you would marry Lily," cried Mrs. Graham, putting down her cup of tea.

"Auntie!" exclaimed the young man, first staring, then laughing outright. Mrs. Graham laughed too.

"Never mind," she said. "I am sure Lily is a nice girl, though you have not seen her."

"Aunt, I do not doubt it."

"Then suppose you had seen her, and suppose she liked you, why should you not marry her?"

"Auntie, what man in his senses would marry on a hundred a year?"

"Well, but you would marry if you had a better income."

"I suppose so, auntie."

He spoke with something very like indifference. Marriageable men—by which we mean men who want to marry—may be divided into two broad classes. Both proceed on the prudential principle which makes a good housekeeper say: "Traps are worthless, I must get a cat." He who cares for home comfort provides himself with a wife, since no adequate substitute has yet been found for that useful person; but whereas your thoughtful man generally takes a sober tabby, your thoughtless one prefers a graceful tortoise-shell, and actually likes a kitten best of all. He likes the kitten because it is a kitten, pretty, frolicsome, and full of tricks. He forgets that the days of kittenhood are brief and never return—he does not ask himself whether his kitten will make a good mouser and be worth its keep as the years pass on; the present, not the future, is all that the heedless man cares for. Now, Edward Graham's "I suppose so" showed in its very tone that he hovered between the thoughtful and the thoughtless marriageable man; he had not so far made up his mind as to be either very prudent or very foolish; but was, like nine men out of ten, ready for whatever fate might turn up. On one point

only was he firmly resolved: not to marry on a hundred a year.

"Well, Lily Scot is poor," resumed Mrs. Graham, "but I daresay, Ned, you would like her."

"I daresay I should," was the amused reply.

"Well, now, what sort of a girl would you like?"

"A pretty girl, auntie, because I like beauty; a gentle one, because, though I look quiet, I am rather hard to deal with; a feminine one, because a masculine one is my detestation; and a silent one, because I hate noise, tattle and chatter. Then a careful one, because I am poor——"

"Lily to a T!" cried Mrs. Graham. "You must marry Lily."

"On a hundred a year, auntie?"

Mrs. Graham looked disconcerted, then, dropping Lily, she shot off at a tangent.

"There are plenty of rich girls, Ned."

"And what should a rich girl take me for?" asked Edward Graham, point-blank. "Have I name, position, distinction of any kind to atone for poverty? Besides, auntie, I should be very desperately in love indeed to marry a rich woman!"

Mr. Edward Graham, as he said this, threw

back his head in a way which was as good as a full stop, so far as putting an end to the subject went.

"Let's talk about you," good-humouredly said Mrs. Graham, drawing her chair closer to her nephew's; "what are you doing?—reading? What big book is that?"

With a smile Edward Graham placed it on her lap.

"Saint Aubin! About Saint Aubin, is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, much amazed. "My dear boy, what do you want with a book about Saint Aubin?"

"I want it professionally, auntie. I mean to cover all England—in time—with *cottages ornés*, villas, mansions, &c., all more or less in that style."

"I see; I understand," replied Mrs. Graham, with a sagacious nod; "but, Ned, why don't you go to Saint Aubin? Why," she cried, brightening, "you could have taken the birds to Lily Scot so well!"

"Yes, auntie, admirably."

"Well, but why don't you go there?" she insisted, looking up from the volume on her lap straight into his face. "If it be an advan-

tage to look at this book, would it not be a greater one to see the place itself."

"I daresay I shall go there next year," answered Edward Graham quietly.

His aunt gazed at him earnestly, then looked again at the book on her lap. Mrs. Graham and her late husband's nephew were on the most friendly terms, but there was one subject which was seldom, if ever, broached between them—the subject of money. Mrs. Graham, a childless widow, had an income of five hundred a year, of which she spent one hundred and thirty pounds on herself; the rest went in charities to the poor, and in generous assistance to her needy relations. She had been very generous to Edward Graham in his early youth, before he came into his hundred a year, helping him to acquire the education of a gentleman, and to become fitted for his profession. He knew it, and since his manhood he had resolutely and openly declined all his aunt's gifts.

"I am not ashamed to have received great kindness from you as a boy," he had said to her, "but a man should do for himself; besides, you have your own relations—your grand-nieces and nephews."

"And Ned Graham has his Scotch pride,"

said Mrs. Graham smiling; but she knew her nephew too well to insist, and so now, guessing what his real motive for not going to Saint Aubin might be, she dropped the subject, and after a while rose and said it was time for her to go.

"I shall see you into a cab, auntie," said Edward Graham.

"A cab!—I never take cabs."

"Well, into the Hammersmith omnibus, then. And now, auntie, are you sure you leave nothing behind—no cap, no umbrella, no bonnet?"

"My cap is in my pocket, and my bonnet on my head, you saucy boy; as to umbrella, I brought none, so you are out for once."

"I daresay I shall find something to-morrow morning," composedly replied Edward Graham.

"If you do, you may keep it."

"Even your cap, auntie?"

"I give you leave to wear it if you find it," was Mrs. Graham's confident answer.

To do the good lady justice, she had not forgotten her cap, yet something she had left behind, after all, for when Edward Graham, after seeing her into the Hammersmith omnibus, came home, and devoted himself once

more to "De Renneville," he found the little portrait of Lily Scot lying between two of its pages. The fair young face, with its dark smiling eyes, seemed to look up at him with a serious and winning grace. Edward Graham gazed at it attentively, and the longer he looked, the better did he like its meaning; then he put it aside carefully, and sat up studying De Renneville until one the next morning.

CHAPTER III.

THE morning was as bright as early sunshine could make it, when, ten days after this, Edward Graham woke in a room which could have accommodated four such rooms as his back-parlour in Chelsea with perfect ease to itself. It was also a very different apartment from that dingy bedroom, with its worn carpet, yellow blind, brown moreen curtains, and cold shining steel grate. The yellow bedroom of La Cité de Jérusalem had never boasted a carpet on its tiled floor; its orange chintz curtains had acquired a mellow tint in many a washing; the sunshine came in through its narrow-paned windows without impediment; its huge chimney was of stone, and bore traces of defaced armorial bearings; and two rococo arm-chairs, rather worm-eaten, and a tall old clothes-press of carved oak almost as black as ebony, were, besides the bed, shrouded in yellow curtains,

the chief articles of furniture of the best bedroom of the best inn in the town of Saint Aubin.

It is fortunate or dangerous, but it is never a matter of indifference, to wish strongly; for a strong wish is apt to bring on its own fulfilment. Mrs. Graham had other thoughts besides the fate of the two birds she had confided to Mr. Cowper's care, as she economically rode home in her omnibus after parting from her nephew. She was both shrewd and simple-minded—a not unfrequent conjunction, else poets would not so often be the wisest and the most foolish of men—and her conjectures were now closer to the truth than Edward Graham would have given her credit for.

"Now, I know Ned is dying to see that Saint Aubin place," she soliloquised, looking hard all the time at a sleepy old gentleman opposite her, who was nodding over his cane. "I saw the sparkle in his eye as I spoke of it, and how it died out as I asked why he did not go. He can't afford it, poor fellow! Then he has bought that book, and I daresay spent all his money on it, and so he must wait tell next year? Now, how could I manage that, I wonder. He is such an obstinate animal, you see!"

Edward Graham's obstinacy, and Mrs. Graham's resolve to get the better of it in this particular instance, led to one disastrous result. The good lady forgot all about getting down till she had been driven three quarters of a mile beyond her own door; but very little did this mishap affect Mrs. Graham, for, by that time, the problem was solved, and she could utter with Archimedes her triumphant "Eureka!" Some animals must be hunted down, but others must be trapped to be captured: to that tribe Mrs. Graham conceived that her nephew belonged, and she found, as she thought, the very trap for him. She began setting it the next morning, and in a week's time it was ready.

Edward Graham was just on the point of going out one morning, when his aunt's double-knock was heard at the door, and she burst in upon him with the breathless exclamation—

"They are quite safe!"

"They, auntie?—what are they?" asked Edward Graham, rather taken by surprise.

"Why, the birds, of course. I have just had a letter from Lily Scot, and she is so pleased! And Mr. Cowper took such care of them! They arrived beautifully, and she will be sure not to give them hemp seed."

Nature and profound art are almost identical in their mode of proceeding. Another woman would have begun about the birds because she meant to end in something else: Mrs. Graham spoke about them because, spite the trap she was setting, they were really uppermost in her mind just then, and the result happened to be exactly the same as if she had been guided by the subtlest design. Her nephew was completely thrown off his guard.

"And did you come all the way from Hammersmith to tell me this, auntie?" he asked, smiling with gay banter.

"No, you saucy boy, I did not. I came to ask a favour of you."

"A favour from me, independent auntie!"

"Yes, I want you to do something for me; and I am not sure that you will not say me nay," added Mrs. Graham, giving her nephew a wistful look.

"Not if I can possibly say you yes," he answered warmly; and, untying her bonnet-strings as he spoke, he looked down very kindly into a face which, though it was not young, and had never been fair, was yet that which he loved best upon earth.

"You're a bonny fellow when you smile so,

Ned!" said Mrs. Graham, looking up at him. "But you must not undo my bonnet-strings," she added, laying her hands on his and checking him; "for if you say 'Yes,' I shall have no time to spare; and if you say 'No,' I shall be too much affronted to stay with you."

"You are getting tragic, auntie. And yet you know that, after such an exordium, it must needs be 'Yes.'"

"Very well, then, you will take me over to Saint Aubin to-morrow," she promptly replied, "and bring me back at the end of a fortnight. Mr. Cowper and her photograph—I left it here after all—gave me a wish to see Lily Scot; so I wrote to her, and made every inquiry; and her answer came an hour ago, and it is the easiest and the cheapest thing in the world. I shall stay at Mrs. Scot's, of course, and you can lodge and board for next to nothing at a very good inn, and go about Saint Aubin whilst I am getting acquainted with my god-daughter. So there is only the expense of the journey, which is a trifle, but very troublesome," added Mrs. Graham, emphatically; "for there's from here to Newhaven, and from Newhaven to Dieppe, and from Dieppe to Saint Aubin, in a dreadful tumble-down old stage-coach; and as it is out

of the question that I should take such a journey alone, I am *so* glad, Ned, that you will take me!"

"What a dear old creature she is!" thought Edward Graham, still looking down into his aunt's face; "and what an effort all this scheming must have cost her, and how she is going to spend her money, and to make herself awfully sea-sick, not that she may see Lily Scot, but, God bless her! that *I* may see Saint Aubin."

"Well," briskly said Mrs. Graham, who felt uneasy at his silence, "when do we start, Ned? —to-morrow?"

But Edward Graham would not let his aunt off so easily. He knit his dark eyebrows and said severely,

"Aunt, what becomes of our contract? I can't afford this journey; and you know that our articles forbid me to let you pay for it."

"You are very disagreeable!" cried Mrs. Graham, tying her bonnet-strings, and speaking very fast. "I just ask you to do me a favour once on a time, and you will not. I say it again—you are very disagreeable!"

"I only wanted to show you how thoroughly you are in my power, auntie," good-humouredly

rejoined Edward Graham, deliberately untying his aunt's bonnet-strings once more; "and how, if I chose to do so, I could keep you for ever on this side of the sea."

"Then you will take me over?" said Mrs. Graham, brightening.

"Yes, auntie, I will. And of course I do not suspect you of any other design than that which you avow. I do not think for a moment that you want to serve or please me. Knowing as I do your self-seeking, calculating disposition, I can have no such thought."

"Don't, Ned, please," remonstrated Mrs. Graham, looking uneasy.

"Auntie, you do not escape me so. You are taking a formidable step—weigh it well. Think of sea-sickness."

"No," interrupted Mrs. Graham, looking alarmed. "I won't think of it, please."

"Then think of me, auntie. Am I adamant, that you take me over to the dangerous vicinity of Miss Lily Scot? Think how fatal the consequences may be—for she is poor, and I am poor; yet she is lovely, and I may be fascinating as well as fascinated, and——"

"Don't fall in love with her, Ned!" cried Mrs. Graham, eagerly. "What I said the other

night was all nonsense. I wish I had not left her photograph here. Do not fall in love with her—please do not."

"Tell a man not to take a fever when he is going to the very spot where it is rife. The photograph has done its work—I feel every symptom of the malady upon me."

"Nonsense," vigorously remarked Mrs. Graham; "you will be so wrapt up in all the old houses that you will care no more for Lily Scot than if she were a—a griffin."

"Auntie, I adore griffins—in heraldry, of course."

"You are a saucy boy," retorted Mrs. Graham, who was beaming with her success, for when her grave nephew indulged in banter he was very well pleased indeed.

Edward Graham was glad, and, what was better, he did not care to hide it.

"I would not have let you get over me, auntie, if I had known what you were about," he said frankly; "but I am not sorry that you have prevailed. I did wish to see Saint Aubin and Miss Lily Scot of course beyond all things."

"Ah! if you would only let me have my way oftener," reproachfully said Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, auntie, you would like it; but you see

I will not," he answered, with perfect candour.

And thus it came to pass that whilst Mrs. Graham, who was not sea-sick after all, found herself on this morning in a pleasant bedroom overlooking a garden full of monthly roses, her nephew woke, as we said, in the yellow room of the Cité de Jérusalem.

It is a strange thing and not an unpleasant one, when we are young, cheerful, and not nervous, to waken in a new country, hear foreign speech, and see for the first time the hundred little foreign sights that are so wonderfully interesting then, and of which, alas! the interest so rapidly fades away. In ten minutes Edward Graham was up and dressed. The whole morning lay before him to see and explore the old mediæval town which had haunted him by night and by day for the last eighteen months. "I shall not hurry," he thought as he went down a dark stone staircase. "I shall skip nothing, and I trust miss nothing. This is an old house—what is there here?" He pushed a door open, and standing on the threshold, took a deliberate survey of a yard whence shrill voices of women, much cooing of pigeons, and loud cackling of hens had been rising in pleasant confusion for the last half hour. It was only

the yard of a Norman inn, but how charming it looked in its picturesque untidiness! The old stone walls were crumbling away in dark and yellow patches; a crazy wooden staircase, with linen drying on the banisters, climbed up against one side of the building. It led to some low, gloomy-looking rooms above the broad stables, where, through the open door, Edward Graham caught a glimpse of a noble grey Norman mare stamping and neighing impatiently. "That creature has the head of one of Phidias's horses," thought the young architect with sparkling eyes; "I must make a sketch of her—if I have time," he added with a sigh; for what did he see that he would not have liked to sketch?—that old car lying on a heap of rubbish, with one of its wheels off, like a disabled veteran; those children gaily tilting themselves on either end of a long pole; the hens scratching on a dung-hill; and, above all, an old well buried in the wall, and which was all wreathed and garlanded with a rich green vine, just now lit up by a long golden sunbeam.

"Monsieur wants something," said a servant-girl carrying a pail of water and stopping short before Edward Graham, who, after deliberately taking her all in, from her white cap to her short

petticoats and neat little wooden shoes, replied in slow though decent French that he wanted his breakfast in an hour's time, and turning on his heel, walked out of the house. At once he passed from the noisy, cheerful, sunny world of the innyard to a gloomy region of dark narrow streets and tall wooden houses black with the smoke of centuries. At the end of one tortuous street he caught a pale glimpse of a sunlit gothic church far away, but lovely though it looked, like a heavenly citadel not to be reached unless by passing through the shadow of the dark valley, Edward Graham was in no hurry to reach it. "I will miss nothing—nothing," he said, setting his teeth and knitting his brows with the old Roman tenacity, "and I will be in no hurry either." Accordingly he began with his own house, for the time being, the inn. It was of stone, strong and quite plain save for an oval medallion above the narrow door, within which was carved the representation of a city with the clearly cut date of 1587 beneath it. To this the house which had been a private one for two hundred years owed its name of Cité de Jérusalem which the inn had adopted as a sign. And was that Jerusalem such as our forefathers imagined it? There

were walls around this town, walls strong and high with battlements and places of vantage for a good marksman. The gate was a strong one, flanked with turrets and garnished with portcullis and drawbridge. And there were streets and houses and towers and churches with steeples to them in that Jerusalem which if it still felt the need of prayer could scarcely be the heavenly city towards which we are all tending. Earthly or celestial, it was the goal of two travellers who appeared on either side of the oval medallion in which Jerusalem was enshrined. One of these journeyers was warm and weary; his feet were bare, poor fellow, he had taken off his slouched hat and carried it in one hand, the other supported a staff resting on his shoulder, and from which his cloak was hanging. The other traveller was struggling against the wind; he had kept his hat on, but his cloak was nearly blown away from his shoulders, one hand firmly grasped his long staff, the other rested on his gourd, his very step was firm—he had buskins on to be sure—and spoke confidence and bravery.

"Yes, that is life," thought Edward Graham, turning away, "an end in view, and a hard battle for it. That first warm and tired fellow

will never reach Jerusalem, never; and that other one will get in, even if he should storm the city. Be it so."

To which of the two travellers Edward Graham, unconsciously perhaps, likened himself, we need scarcely say, as he devoted himself to the mastery of his Jerusalem, which just then was called Saint Aubin. He went up the street, a characteristic one. The first floor of the wooden houses projected over the mean, dark shops. The second floor projected over the first, and the gable-pointed roof looked as if it would meet its opposite neighbour, so narrow was the strip of sky between. According to De Renneville the Saint Aubin crusaders had brought this gloomy fashion from the East, and as the local authorities had prohibited it in the year fifteen hundred and ten, more than three hundred years had passed over every one of these crazy tenements. One corner house of great size and strength rose with a sort of castellated dignity above its neighbours, and the successive projections of its three storeys gave it a look of mediæval defiance that was still too much for the great leveller, Time. Near it some meaner dwellings submitted to the law of decay. The old builders had covered

the front of these houses with slates, or layers of wood carved like tiles, so as to form patterns. But now slate and wood had peeled away in many places, and so one house originally adorned with lozenges had been recklessly mended in squares; and another had not been mended at all, and showed its bare unsightly patches; and another again, so sleek and handsome was its dark slate coat, looked like a decent burgher clad in city armour, *cap-à-pie* or, better still, like a plump old dragon, who had coiled himself round into respectability, and left off the slaying of knights and devouring of virgins, that had made him so obnoxious in his youth. And then there were houses of which the tall and strong corner beams were carved, and many a quaint and rude bit of sculpture that had survived the dust and smoke of centuries, now charmed Edward Graham's eye. Over one Gothic door the Angel Gabriel uttered his pious Ave for ever, and over another the Mater Dolorosa sat in her immortal sorrow. In another house Adam and Eve were carved on the corner beams, whilst on the central one appeared the Spirit of Evil, most uncomfortably perched on the tree of knowledge, and there biding the hour of temptation. And thus the

end of the street was reached, and with it the great parish church of the Basse-ville of Saint Aubin.

That church, as all who have visited the picturesque old Norman town will know, is a fine one, as fine as many a cathedral. It stands on a narrow place, and rises from amidst ancient houses, dark, dingy, and mean, and its heavy stone mass thereby looks all the more imposing. There is a meaning and a harmony in all things. Gothic edifices, however fine they may be when isolated, lose at least as much as they gain on being thus divided from the surroundings that grew with them. Edward Graham could not but feel how striking was the aspect of that old church, girded with gable-roofed houses and narrow, dark streets, delving down to the heart of the town. As he stood and looked, a sudden fire from the east touched the two lofty towers, and passed in pale golden light across the rich carving of the façade, adding to the impressive gloom of the three deep porches below.

"Fine, very fine," thought Edward Graham, "but too broad—yes, too broad." And after passing this temperate criticism on a noble though not faultless specimen of Gothic art,

he devoted himself to the central porch. An impatient man would have first entered the church, but Edward Graham, though ardent, was not impatient, and the fine sculptures above the great door attracted him strangely. The unknown mediæval artist had chosen for his subject the great day of the final judgment and the resurrection of all flesh. Christ sat on his throne, and below him rose the dead, leaving their graves to go and meet their doom. Mothers with their babes clasped to their bosoms, nuns in long stoles, hooded monks, priests in their robes, mailed warriors, bearded patriarchs, slender youths and tender maidens—all were there, some walking in grave procession, the calmness of their long slumbers in their whole bearing; others rising from their graves, pushing back their heavy tombstones, with the startled expression of their waking fixed for ever on their stone faces.

Though deep was his contemplation, Edward Graham could not help seeing one of the low side doors in the porch pushed open, and two ladies come out of the church. The foremost was his aunt, fresh and blooming, and in the slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl behind her, he at once recognised Miss Lily Scot.

"Out already!" cried Mrs. Graham, seeming much amazed. "I made sure you were fast asleep."

"I have been out an hour; auntie, but I made sure *you* were fast asleep."

"Old birds are early risers," gaily replied his aunt. "My dear," she added, turning to her god-daughter, "that is my nephew; I need not tell him who you are, for I forgot your photograph at his place, and I do believe he has it still."

Mrs. Graham was a good woman, a shrewd one too in some things, but she often carried frankness to want of tact. Her nephew thought this a very unnecessary piece of candour. For that delicate modesty which, spite the outcry against the girlhood of our own day, is, and always will be, the grace of young maidens, of every period, is so frail and fair that a breath will hurt it. Some girls would have blushed, others tittered, and others again looked foolish on being thus indiscreetly introduced to a young man of twenty-five; but the delicate bloom of Lily Scot's cheek did not deepen, her soft dark eyes were not averted, and her fair, refined face kept its mingled expression of sweetness and composure. She looked what she was, a young lady, both modest and self-

possessed; and though she was very simply dressed, everything about her, from her little black hat to her neat kid gloves, was perfect in its kind and in its way. Charmed in the sense of being smitten Edward was not, but he was charmed with her beauty, with her look of delicate refinement, and with her quiet sensible manners.

"Have you seen the brown house, Mr. Graham?" she asked in a pleasant low voice; "it is not on your road from the Cité de Jérusalem, but it is close by here, though so much out of the way that it is not easily found. We can show it to you at once, if you like. It is on our way home."

"Yes, you must come and look at it," cried Mrs. Graham, walking off first, and recklessly leaving her pretty god-daughter and her nephew behind; "and when you have seen it, you can come back to the church, then after luncheon you can come and see me, for I shall not go out any more to-day. And the brown house is wonderful, and here we are. You see that shop and the dark passage next it—well, then, go in there till you come to a shabby old court, then open your eyes and look about you; and now

good morning to you, my dear boy, and come and see me after luncheon."

And so with a warm shake of the hand, a nod and a smile, Mrs. Graham walked off with her god-daughter; and Edward Graham's eyes could not help following them both until the poke bonnet of the elder lady and the black hat with the sweet face of the younger one under it had turned the corner of a street and vanished from his view.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARK passage led Edward Graham to a dingy and sunless court enclosed by a dilapidated building of monastic aspect and a few old untenanted houses. One only seemed to be inhabited, but the dainty trefoils carved around its crazy windows were crumbling away into dust, and the few flower-pots placed on one window-sill, and there, looking most insecure, only gave a last picturesque grace to its decay. But where was the brown house?

"Behind you," said a lad to whom Edward Graham put the question; and turning quickly round, he saw it standing alone in an angle of the court. It was only a little narrow, two-storeyed house; but its front of brown varnished wood was as polished and as richly carved as a lady's casket. Graceful arabesques enshrined the diamond-paned windows; chimeras supported the dainty balconies, and two laughing

girlish heads, each set in a niche, looked down from beneath the sharp projecting gable of the roof. In all his experience, Edward Graham had seen nothing like this, so finished, so perfect. And for whom had this house been built? For some merchant of the days when Saint Aubin had ships, and sent them forth as far as the Indian seas; for a man whose daughters—had they dark hair and soft dark eyes?—sat and plied their wheel in the calm gloom of the rooms within, rich, yet as busy as their own handmaidens. "And now only the wealthiest nobleman could indulge in such a gem," thought Edward Graham. "And yet what a cottage it would make!" Vain hope, and he knew it well as he turned away with a sigh and went back to the church. This time he gave up the porch and entered the building at once. It did not differ from other Gothic churches. It had their solemn gloom, and that look of perpetual prayer which pervades them. It was rich in stained glass, all ancient, and so gorgeous in hues that Edward Graham could not help thinking of the wonderful garden in the story of Aladdin's Lamp, where rubies, sapphires and amethysts grew on the trees. The windows were almost all votive offerings, and the young

man found it both touching and impressive to look at the old windows, representing with such skill of design as the times afforded, and with incomparable brilliancy of colour, some trait taken from Scripture, or from the lives of the saints; and then to see low down in a corner of the gorgeous picture the quaint figure of a burgher in sober black clothing, kneeling, with hands folded in prayer, his wife and sons and daughters behind him, and remaining there in that frail though durable material, as a sign that in his day he had been liberal of his hard-earned substance to God's church and for God's honour.

A few women were kneeling nigh the high altar, but otherwise the church was lonely. Strong and self-reliant though he was, like most men of twenty-five, Edward Graham also prayed. He had faults, some of which were dangerous to himself and to others; but he had not lost, and never could lose, that simplicity of nature which makes a man feel the need of prayer. If *he* had had a church to build, it should have been a devout one. He had indeed a great contempt for every form of modern irreligion, and was characteristically convinced that an impious architect could build nothing

worth looking at. "Heathen or Christian, a man must believe to do anything great," was Edward Graham's sweeping assertion; "and the man who can only talk and not do, is just no man at all." So he prayed as his Italian mother had taught him, and after a long, leisurely examination of the whole church, he left it by a side door. The high and dark church wall extended along one side of the street. On the other side the houses rose high, narrow, and projecting. An old fountain, defaced and rude, gave forth a clear thread of water; and a few green weeds grew bravely in its upper crevices. Facing this was another of these wonderful old houses that are the glory of Saint Aubin. A gigantic key stood out above the dark open gap of a blacksmith's shop below—a true mediæval shop, that had never known, and never would know, panes of glass. The smoke of the forge, which now gave forth a bright glow, had blackened the whole house, and such carved figures as remained unbroken in their little niches. They were all small, and of a dainty cast. One represented Saint Margaret, with her dragon still coiled around her feet; at the other angle of the building stood a mitred saint with his little pastoral staff

in his hand, and near him a canary bird hung in his cage, singing his carol of love and praise in the good bishop's ear. Under the gable was a deep arch, in which a broad window was set, and there—how contrived it was not easy to say from below—was a garden full of laurustinums, amongst which a tabby cat was sunning herself, reckless of the precipice beneath.

Narrow though the street was, the brightness of the morning was stealing into it fast; golden mites danced in the sunshine, and the glimpse of the port, with one or two faint lines of shipping, and the shining sea with which it ended, was seen through the soft yellow haze of a September morning. The young man stood like one in a dream; five hundred years seemed to roll up the tide of Time, and if a wimpled dame had been gazing at him from one of the narrow windows opposite—if a knight in mail had reined in his steed at the locksmith's shop, and told him about some loose rivet in his armour, it seemed to Edward Graham as if he should not have been so much amazed after all. He was no worshipper of the Middle Ages for their own sake; he had always looked at them from an architectural point of view; but the

impression he now received was so strong that it gave him some trouble to shake it off.

"This will not do," he thought, turning homewards. "I did not come here to dream, but to work like a man who has a name to win and a position to make. I shall begin after breakfast—yes, with the brown house."

No art or science really stands alone. Edward Graham had devoted much time to drawing, and he drew remarkably well. When his breakfast was over, he went back to the brown house, made a rapid and spirited water-colour sketch of the whole, then began a careful drawing of the exquisite carving which framed the lower window. It might be useful some day, and even if it were not, he could not let that graceful shell above, and those drooping wreaths on either side, escape him. He worked hard, yet did not feel the passing of time. The court was a tranquil, shady place. Few people lived in it, and these few seemed all to be gone out. No sun came to change Edward Graham's effect, and no loiterers to stand in his light. Children had not found him out, and he could work unmolested the best part of the day. He was fond of his aunt, and Lily Scot was charm-

ing, yet it was with a sigh of regret that he put by his task to seek these two ladies.

Saint Aubin is divided, like many French towns, into the Basse-ville and the Haute-ville. It was in the Haute-ville that Mrs. Scot resided, and to this Edward Graham now made his way. The Basse-ville was full of noise and traffic just then—that portion especially which lay next the port—and men in woollen jackets and women in white caps abounded; but as Edward Graham climbed up the steep street which led to the upper town, silence and tranquillity were once more around him. Old disused fortifications still enclosed the Haute-ville, and it was picturesquely divided from the Basse-ville by an archway massive and roofed, in which an old clock told the time, and close to which rose a belfry, whence every night at nine a large bell, called Roland, rang the curfew. From beneath the dark arch scathed by the fire of centuries, Edward Graham could see a long melancholy street, with tall stately stone houses on either side. Close to him, and resting against the arch, was a fountain, by no means Gothic, with Altheus and Arethusa in languid attitudes, and a fat Cupid hovering over them. Looking at this specimen of pseudo-classic with

calm disdain, Edward Graham passed under the arch, and found himself in the Haute-ville. It looked a tranquil, aristocratic neighbourhood; the wooden houses, the Gothic gable ends, the narrow doorways, the carved beams of the Basse-ville were gone, and in their stead the young architect saw stone houses of the seventeenth century, with iron balconies and tall gates, beneath which the stately family carriage and its row of footmen could pass and enter the wide courtyard within. Armorial bearings, scutcheons, and coronets, or, when these failed, gigantic heads of heathen gods, or grim lions' mouths or laughing masks, with flutes and tambourines, adorned these ancient gates. One of them stood wide open as Mr. Graham passed by, and from the bales scattered about the court, he saw that the private dwelling had been turned into a warehouse. He looked up; the shield above the gate had been defaced, no doubt in the great storm of 1793, but on either side still appeared two large mocking heads of satyrs, who seemed to say to the passers-by:

"You see how it goes with houses—the solemn judge, the gay cavalier, have made room for the manufacturer. *Sic transit*, &c.;

but we are still here—time passes, and changes come, and we look and laugh on."

The street was a long one, and Mrs. Scot's house was one of the last in it. It was a small, stone house, solidly built and profusely ornamented, in the style of the seventeenth century. The dormer windows, heavy with carving, were set in the steep slate roof, and the two leaden vanes which adorned it were of the most florid kind. Mr. Graham recognised them at once from the Cupids sitting on the edge of the vases of flowers, as figuring in De Renneville's book; he recognised, too, the pilasters between the four first floor windows, and the carved heads and ponderous wreaths of foliage, and the massive oaken gate, studded with huge brass nails in patterns. This gate now stood ajar, and Edward Graham, as he raised the knocker, caught a glimpse of a large, airy courtyard, and a green garden behind it. No one having answered his summons, he crossed the threshold and went in. A door stood open on his left. It showed him a large dining-room, with plain furniture, a shining floor. and lofty white ceiling, where flies were buzzing alone. It was useless to go in there. Neither did Mr. Graham think it needful to go up a wide stair-

case to his right. As he stood in doubt, he saw a bright girlish head peeping down at him from above the iron banisters, all scroll and foliage, and such as are seldom seen out of old French houses.

"Mademoiselle," he began, hat in hand; but in a moment the head vanished, and he was once more alone. There was nothing for it but to cross the court and enter the neutral ground of the garden. His hand was on the low wicket-gate when he heard a patter of young feet coming down the staircase behind him, and a clear, young voice asked in French civilly, yet not without a sort of authority "what Monsieur wanted."

Edward turned round and recognised the girl who had been peeping at him a minute before, and had vanished so precipitately on being addressed. He was struck with her appearance. She was tall and slender, and had all the awkwardness of figure of early youth. She was in mourning, and by no means well or becoming ly dressed. Her sleeves were too short, and her skirt might have been longer; then if her feet were very small and pretty, it was a pity, thought Mr. Graham, that they were slip-shod, and yet he was struck with her beaming aspect,

for her cheeks bloomed like roses, and her dark eyes shone like diamonds, and there was a glitter of gold in her brown hair, and that sort of brightness about her which, after all, is no mean portion of beauty. All this he saw whilst he answered that he wanted Madame Graham.

"She is in the garden," answered the young girl, still speaking French. She opened the low wicket-gate, and showed him into the garden. It was prettily laid out in beds of chinasters, enclosed by a green rim of trees, in the shadow of which Mrs. Graham now sat alone, fast asleep, in a garden chair. Mr. Graham's young guide raised her fine, dark eyebrows, and looked at him in perplexed inquiry, as much as to say. "Shall I waken her?" Mrs. Graham settled the question by opening her eyes.

"Marraine," promptly said the young lady, addressing her in rather broken English, "this gentleman wants to speak to you."

Having thus introduced Mr. Graham, she seated herself on a low stool at Mrs. Graham's feet, not seeming to consider her presence any intrusion; and then she looked up at Mr. Graham with a free, fearless look of her bright eyes, nursing her knee all the time.

"Well," cried Mrs. Graham, "what have you

been doing?—sketching, measuring; and how do you like the brown house?"

"The brown house is only wood," interrupted the young lady at her feet, and not giving Edward Graham time to answer.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, looking down at her kindly, "I came to Saint Aubin to see one god-daughter, and I have got three besides Lily—her two sisters, and this little fairy, whose name is also Lily——Lily what, my dear?"

"Lily Bertram," promptly answered the young lady.

"Ay, Lily Bertram. She called me Marraine at once, which, it seems, means godmother; and Marraine I am to the whole lot of them. I am all alone just now—am I not, Lily?"

"Mrs. Scot is taking her afternoon nap in her room," said Miss Bertram, nothing loth to join in the conversation, "and Jane and Louisa are gone out with Sarah; and you know, Marraine, I said I would stay and keep you company."

"Yes, my dear. And what is Lily Scot doing?"

"Lily is making a tart in the kitchen."

"Oh! to be sure," cried Mrs. Graham, brightening. "I forgot all about it. You are to stay

and dine with us, Ned; and it seems Lily is a wonderful hand at tarts."

"Lily is wonderful at everything," remarked Miss Bertram, whose prevailing fault was neither bashfulness nor taciturnity. "Her tatting is tatting, that's all; and then she makes such sweet baskets and lovely watch-pockets; and, Marraine, do tell her to make you a case for your goloshes—brown cloth braided with crimson! No one makes golosh-cases like Lily," enthusiastically added the young lady.

"I wish that little chatterbox would be off!" thought Edward Graham.

But of this there seemed to be no chance. It was evident that this Miss Lily Bertram was already a favourite with Mrs. Graham, and also that she was quite at home in Mrs. Scot's house.

"Shall I show him the view, Marraine?" she suddenly asked—"I mean before the sun sets?"

"Yes, do," answered Mrs. Graham. "Go with the child, Ned. No, I am not going. I am lazy," she added, with her bright smile.

"It is close by," said Lily, starting up, and looking rather anxiously at Edward Graham, as if she feared he would rebel and not come. "We shall not be long, you know."

Ungraciousness was not Edward Graham's

fault after all; so with a courteous acknowledgment of Miss Bertram's kindness, he followed her down a sloping path, arched over with young trees, and ending in a glimpse of the yellow western sky. Lily went on before him with a light springing step, rather impeded by the state of her left shoe. Twice it came off her foot, compelling her to a more sober pace. Just as they reached the end of the path, a little tabby kitten scampered aross it and vanished among the trees.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried Lily, "that is my kitten—my tabby! It must have climbed over the wall. I must catch it."

And not troubling herself any more about Mr. Graham, she darted off in quick pursuit, leaving him to find out the view alone. The discovery gave him no trouble. The path ended in a broad terrace enclosed by a low ivy-covered wall, and beyond and below him lay the prospect he had come to see. Above spread the lofty blue of the sky flushed with sunset; below the houses and spires and gardens of Saint Aubin sloped down to a green valley, through which wound a river, with patches of shadow or crimson streaks of light, or broad and clear streaks of pale silver; and beyond all this

again, far away to the west, in the golden haze of declining day, the narrow port, and the faint lines of the shipping, and the sea fading for ever away.

Mr. Graham had expected nothing like this—so sweet, so fair; and he was both surprised and charmed when he at length turned away. The garden, too, seemed larger than he had thought it to be, and instead of returning by the alley along which he had come, he entered another, which, after a few windings, brought him in view of one of the beds of china-asters lying under the windows of the house. Around that bed wound a little gravelled path, and there Lily suddenly appeared, heated, breathless, and angry, no longer in pursuit of the kitten, but chasing a tall and very handsome youth of eighteen or so, who wore the uniform of a French collegian, and who not merely held her lost shoe, but flourished it aloft like a trophy.

"Give it to me, William," she entreated, panting for breath, and standing still on one side of the flower-bed, whilst he too, unconscious of Mr. Graham looking on, paused on the other.

"You know my terms," he answered.

"I'll die first," answered, Lily, with a flush

of temper and passion no one would have expected from her bright, laughing face.

"Very well," said William, putting the shoe into his pocket, "no kiss, no shoe."

"I hate you!" cried Lily, who looked ready for tears.

A window on the ground-floor of the house was now thrown open, and in the background of a real French kitchen, bright with the brightest of copper saucepans, appeared the dainty figure and charming face of the fair Miss Scot. An apron with a bib to it was pinned before her, her sleeves were tucked up to the elbows, and her white arms were covered with flour.

"William," she said, with demure severity, "give Lily back her shoe."

William looked sulky, but he did not venture to disobey this fair young Mentor.

"There, you little vixen," he said, taking the shoe from his pocket and throwing it at Lily's feet, "take it." With which civil speech he thrust his hands into his pockets, and went away whistling.

Lily Bertram put on her shoe, Miss Scot closed the window, and Mr. Graham came forward.

"He is such a bear," said Lily Bertram explanatorily to Mr. Graham; "all boys are at that age," she added, with the gravity of a young matron; "but it is Louisa's fault, you know. We played at forfeits the other day, and she said I was to kiss William, and I never will. And isn't the view pretty," she added, with an abrupt transition; then, without giving him time to answer, "Ours is much prettier. You can see it at once before the sun sets. We live close by, and I am going in now."

"You are very good," answered Mr. Graham, "but I cannot avail myself of your kind offer."

"You would have plenty of time to come back to dinner," persisted Lily Bertram. "Mrs. Scot never wakens till six, and Lily is very long about her tarts, and papa is out, and even if he were not he would not mind you," added she, with engaging frankness.

Spite this bit of candour, Mr. Graham declined Miss Bertram's offer not churlishly, but so positively that, parting back the tangled hair from her forehead, as if to see him better, she looked at him with a sort of childish surprise at his coldness, till a sudden recollection striking her, she exclaimed, clasping her hands in dismay,

"Oh! my goodness! if Tabby has gone over the other wall I shall never see her again. I know they'll eat her. I know they will!"

With which distracting conclusion Miss Bertram vanished.

Mr. Graham found his aunt again asleep in her chair, but she woke at the sound of his steps, and her first words were,

"My dear boy, I never thought of telling you, but the birds are so well, and they chirruped when I went nigh the cage. I don't mean that they know me, so you need not laugh, and they are so fond of Lily already. And where is Lily—little Miss Bertram?"

"Gone in pursuit of her kitten, aunt."

"She is a kitten herself," warmly said Mrs. Graham. "I am so fond of her already, and you know I don't take fancies easily."

Mr. Graham smiled, but did not contradict.

CHAPTER V.

IN an old English mansion which Edward Graham had once visited he had seen a Dutch picture, which showed forth in an old room with quaint black furniture, blue china, and eastern carpets, a widowed lady and her family. The widow was a comely dame, on whose charms sorrow had not told heavily. She sat as blooming in her carved chair as if she expected that a second bridegroom should come to woo her whilst her weeds were still new, but she looked so good-humoured, so tranquil, and unconscious of all harm, that none save a carping critic could be angry not to find the traces of tears or of sorrow on her pleasant face.

Whilst the widow sat thus and took her ease, her eldest daughter, a fair Dutch girl with blue eyes and golden hair, ministered to the wants of the younger children. She was very pretty, but besides this there was a look of active

strength and willing zeal in the figure and bearing of this young maiden as she stood with her little brothers and sisters around her, that pleased Edward Graham even more than her beauty. She was as a busy, working Martha, full of graceful ardour, whilst her mother—no Mary listening to divine teaching—sat in idle ease, dreaming of all that was to be done, and thinking herself the head of the family all the time.

This picture came back very vividly to Edward Graham's mind in the evening, when he saw Mrs. Scot taking matters as easily as if she were a guest in her own house, whilst on her pretty, graceful daughter's shoulders fell all the burden, without the honour of her mother's position. Mrs. Scot sat at the head of the table, indeed, and said grace, but it was Lily Scot who saw to the wants of the guests, Lily who kept a vigilant though kind eye over her two younger sisters, maidens much inclined to giggling; Lily who gave the half-whispered orders to the middle-aged, gipsy-looking English servant woman who brought in the dishes and waited at table; Lily, in short, who did everything save the talking. This she left to her mamma, who went through it gracefully, but

with the evident consciousness that she was doing more than her share of the heavy duties of hospitality.

Mrs. Scot was not fifty. She had been a pretty, blue-eyed woman, and though rather too stout, was still attractive. Nature had given her an easy temper, passive selfishness, and plenty of indolence; and she had made the best of Nature's gifts. She could talk fluently, and was an extensive letter-writer, but beyond these exertions Mrs. Scot had never been able to go. When she was left a young widow in Saint Aubin, Mrs. Scot declared she could not remain in a foreign country, far from her friends. She must go back to Torquay. She was born in Torquay, her brother and sister-in-law had a house in Torquay, and they had no children, and there was a large garden to their house. She really must go to Torquay as soon as she could; but she never did. She wrote numberless letters to her brother and sister-in-law about her plans; she wearied her friends in Saint Aubin with an accurate description of the large garden in Torquay—which she had never seen—but that was all. The Winter was a severe one, she could not travel; then she had to take a new lease of the house, and it would

be a pity to waste so much rent; then the baby had the whooping-cough; then all the children's things had to be got ready; and so time slipped through her fingers, and months and years brought their own tale, and Mrs. Scot dreamed of her brother in Torquay, and her sister-in-law, and their having no children, and their house with the large garden attached to it, as if that garden were a rare prospective advantage to herself and her family, until her brother died and her sister-inlaw married again, and had a baby every year, and the house in Torquay and its garden were lost to Mrs. Scot, who wondered as much as if that garden were her own ancestral acres, of which she had been defrauded by her brother's widow. This mixture of indolence and procrastination helped to keep Mrs. Scot a widow. She had not been long bereaved when she declared, with a great gush of tears, that one of her heaviest troubles was that in justice to her orphan children she must marry again—it was hard, but she must; dear Tom himself would have felt that she must take another mate; but she never did. This second husband was like the garden in Torquay—an imaginary requirement, never to be enjoyed by Mrs. Scot. She wrote to all her friends,

to her brother, and later to her sister-in-law, after that lady's second marriage, to know if she ought to accept Captain Blake, who was going to propose, she knew—or Mr. Reynolds, whose attentions were so pointed that all Saint Aubin talked about it; but Captain Blake was ordered off to India, and Mr. Reynolds was sent to Pau, where he died; and in the meanwhile Lily, who was thirteen, quietly took to managing the house, the income, and the children, and did it very well—so well that Mrs. Scot never seemed to find it out, but spent more and more time in her easy-chair, or on the sofa, or in entertaining her friends, or in writing letters, nursing herself in the fond belief that she had never been able to give poor dear Tom a successor, though she had been wooed and wooed, and was an interesting victim to conjugal fidelity and maternal love.

Whilst Mrs. Scot thus fed on imaginary virtues, or cherished imaginary grievances, as the case might be—for, as we said, she never recovered the loss of the garden in Torquay—Lily, whose young brain was as clear as her mother's was hazy, got through her self-imposed tasks. She had to begin with two little girls very much spoiled, a house untidy from the

garret to the kitchen, a stock of broken chairs and damaged tables, three chests of drawers full of torn frocks, half worn-out stockings, shabby shoes, boots, slippers, collars, and cuffs, and all such rubbish, an income of one hundred and fifty pounds sterling per annum, and two hundred pounds, also sterling, of clear undisputed debts owing to the tradespeople of Saint Aubin. By the time Mrs. Graham crossed the channel to see her god-daughter, the debts had been paid off, the three chests of drawers cleared out, the shattered furniture mended or replaced, the house made as neat as a baby-house, the two unruly children taught to obey (Lily Scot of course), and sent to a daily school, and the income of one hundred and fifty pounds made to supply all the wants of the family, as it well could in so cheap a place as was Saint Aubin, but as it had never done under Mrs. Scot's management. All this Lily Scot had not effected either at once or alone. Many and many a sleepless night had she spent pondering over ways and means, before the debts were paid, or even the wardrobe of her little sisters was brought into order; and she could never have been so successful if her nurse had not been at her elbow. Sarah Webster, a gipsy-looking woman of

forty, could neither read nor write, but she was shrewd, clever, and quick, and to Lily at least devoted. She would have gone through fire and water for her sake; and when she saw how the child had set her young heart on mending the ways of the house, she entered into all her little plans with a zeal that ensured their success. It was natural that in return Lily should ask and take Sarah's advice in all matters that lay within her sphere, and indeed in some that were beyond it.

Something of this Mr. Graham saw as he ate his dinner, watching Miss Scot silent, but never at rest, and listening to Mrs. Scot as she regretfully described the garden at Torquay, and feelingly alluded to her long widowhood. And being a shrewd man, though a young one, he even fathomed the exact depth of the praises of her elder daughter, in which the good lady indulged. Ignoring the many charming traits in that young girl's character, Mrs. Scot could not weary of holding up to admiration those that were of lesser worth. Lily's skill in embroidery and her special gift in the making of tarts, Mrs. Scot would have liked to proclaim on the roofs of St. Aubin; but on her self-denial, her patience, her unwearied industry, Mrs. Scot was silent—

not through want of candour, but because she really did not see these qualities. It was a matter of course that Lily should be so.

But if Mrs. Scot was blind, her guest was not, and when they all adjourned to the drawing-room, a spacious apartment also on the ground-floor of the house, his shrewd observant eye detected everywhere the tokens of Lily's taste and industry. The furniture was old, and had never been handsome, but there were such pretty cushions, bassocks, antimacassars, screens, and inexpensive knicknacks scattered about it, that the old sofa and armchairs had quite a spruce and smart look; and then Lily was so elegant and so neat in herself as she sat between her two younger sisters at a little round table with a lamp in the centre, superintending the crochet of Jane and the tatting of Louisa, and herself going through some marvellous piece of fairy-like work, that Edward Graham justly thought her the prettiest thing in the room. Looking at her thus, he found it easy to listen to Mrs. Scot—Mrs. Graham, who was very tired, was nodding in her chair—even though Saint Aubin gossip was the sole theme of her discourse.

The late Mr. Scot had been a very lazy

young man, and he found it pleasanter to live in Saint Aubin on his little income, than to work and earn money in England. He had brought his young bride to Saint Aubin for the honeymoon, he said—in order to do nothing, said his friends. His children were born there, he died there, and his wife, as we know, remained there; so that Saint Aubin had now become to her, mentally, of course, what the celestial empire is said to be to its inhabitants—the centre of the world. She had practically no ideas beyond it, save in the way of the Torquay platonic grievance. Saint Aubin English ways were Mrs. Scot's great standard of right and wrong, and Saint Aubin English doings her great topics of interest.

The English colony was an extensive one, and it had two rival English churches, in the strife of which Mrs. Scot, though a Catholic, entered with a zeal which surprised her listener. But then the Reverend Mr. Wilson was such a gentleman, and he had such a sweet wife, and Mrs. Baynes, the wife of his opponent, was such a vulgar creature. There was also a Mrs. Randolph, the bosom friend of Mrs. Wilson, who figured in every other sentence of Mrs. Scot's discourse. Mrs. Randolph's ball last year was

evidently an epoch in the annals of Saint Aubin as chronicled by Mrs. Scot, and looking at the chair in which Mrs. Graham was gently snoring, she remarked with great complacency,

"You can't think, my dear Mrs. Graham, how well Lily looked in white muslin with red ribbons!"

"Crimson, mamma, please!" corrected Jane and Louisa from the round table, speaking in a breath. "We all three wore white and crimson ribbons, and Mr. Bertram said that Lily——"

"Hush!" interrupted Lily softly, "what is the difference between red and crimson?"

"But they were crimson," persisted Jane, "and Mr. Bertram said——"

"I remember," interrupted Mrs. Scot, smiling, "Mr. Bertram said that, as Lily was queen of the ball, she did well to wear the royal colour. Well, Mr. Graham, I can assure you it was the most delightful ball I ever was at; but then Mrs. Randolph is such a superior woman. Of course you know her!"

No, strange to say, Mr. Graham did not know Mrs. Randolph.

"Dear me, how odd! She goes to England every year—she is there now. You will be sure

to meet her at her cousin's, the member of Parliament. What is his name, Lily?"

"Johnson, mamma."

"Ah! to be sure. J. Johnson, M.P. for ——; I have seen the card again and again in Mrs. Randolph's card-basket. Lily made it for her —blue and silver beads, the prettiest thing you ever saw, Mr. Graham; but Mrs. Randolph is quite a sweet woman. Mr. Bertram has the highest opinion of Mrs. Randolph. Of course you know Mr. Bertram."

"I have been only one day in Saint Aubin," replied Edward Graham, smiling.

"Well, but you know his house?" persisted Mrs. Scot, "the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. The Hôtel Saint Aubin."

But Mr. Graham did not even know Mr. Bertram's house.

"Why, it is the only house worth seeing in Saint Aubin," persisted Mrs. Scot, "the rest is all rubbish. The Haute-ville is the only decent part of Saint Aubin, and has but one drawback—it is so dear! Why, my own rent is actually twenty-five pounds a year, Mr. Graham! But yet I am thankful that they are going to pull down all these old rookeries in the

Basse-ville," liberally declared Mrs. Scot; "we have had a sea-bathing establishment these five years, thanks to Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard, and we are to have a casino next year, so we may get on in time. Of course it is building at our own cost. The municipality of this wretched place," Mrs. Scot was always abusing Saint Aubin and its ways, "gives nothing save the ground. Now considering that we have been living here years and years, leaving our money here, and I may say it, Mr. Graham, civilizing the people and the place, it is too bad that we should have to build a casino ourselves. I vote to let no Saint Aubin people into it, but Mr. Bertram says it would be illiberal, and Mr. Lennard that we must take all the money we can get. Is not that it, Lily?"

"Mr. Lennard says that we cannot exclude the Saint Aubin people from a casino in their own town, mamma," modestly replied Lily.

"I suppose not," candidly answered Mrs. Scot, "but I should like to—they are so narrow, Mr. Graham! Even Mr. Bertram, though he married one of them, grants that. Whom did he marry, Lily?"

"Mademoiselle Grandjean."

"A fisherman's grand-daughter, Mr. Graham. Such a *mésalliance* for him! You know who the Bertrams are, of course?"

Mr. Graham supposed the Bertrams were an old family. Mrs. Scot stared.

"Why, they are the oldest family in England," she cried; "are they not, Lily?"

"One of the oldest, mamma," replied Lily, with her modest sweetness.

"And don't I say so? One of the oldest. The Gerald Bertrams, is it not, Lily?"

"No, mamma, the Geraldine Bertrams."

"And is not that what I said? But young people always want to know everything better than anyone else. The Geraldine Bertrams, of course!"

She looked at Edward Graham as much as to say, "You hear!" He did hear, but no mansion belonging or having belonged to the Geraldine Bertrams had he ever found in his wanderings, and he remained cooler than Mrs. Scot had expected.

Mr. Graham heard more than enough of the Geraldine Bertrams during the whole evening, which was enlivened, however, by the appearance of several visitors. Foremost of these was

a Mrs. Petherick, a widow lady on the sunny side of forty, and a very pretty woman. She had a neat figure, black hair, a fresh colour, and good though restless black eyes. The first thing they did on entering the room was to fasten on Mr. Graham with the most active and searching curiosity; then, in answer to Mrs. Scot's attempt at introduction, the lady said, graciously,

"Bless you, my dear Mrs. Scot, I know Mr. Graham already; three people came and told me about his sketching the brown house before five o'clock struck to-day! There never was such a place as Saint Aubin, Mr. Graham! If you sneeze at one end of the town everyone hears it at the other. Of course it was Captain Jackall——"

"Jackall!" cried Mrs. Graham, opening her blue eyes. "What an odd name, Mrs. Petherick!" For the two ladies had already met that day.

"It is so ridiculous of me to be always committing that mistake," pathetically remarked Mrs. Petherick, clasping her hands. "Of course I mean Captain Jekyll, though as to his ever having been a captain, unless in courtesy! Bless you, Mrs. Scot, *I* know the cut of a military

man, and, for all his swagger, there's none of it about Captain Jekyll. Well, of course it was he told Mrs. Dunker. How he got in there, and Mr. Dunker so exclusive, is more than I can imagine; but he did, and he's there now. You must know," added Mrs. Petherick, looking at Mr. Graham and his aunt, and addressing them confidentially, "that when this Mr. Jekyll, or Captain Jackall, or what's his name, came to Saint Aubin six months ago, he dropped from the clouds as it were, not knowing a soul. Before a week was over he had got into Mr. Lennard's; at the end of a month he was at Mrs. Dunker's, though Mr. Dunker always swore he did not trust the man; after that he got everywhere, of course. Mrs. Scot gave in last, but being the most amiable creature, she did give in; and now this Jekyll is over all Saint Aubin, except at Mr. Bertram's," added Mrs. Petherick, triumphantly. "No Jackall has got in there yet—no, no—and mark my words, Mrs. Scot, no Jackall ever will."

"Then I daresay we shall see this Captain Jackall," remarked Mrs. Graham, meditatively.

"Of course you will," cried Mrs. Petherick,

much amused. "He is coming this very evening."

"Jekyll," corrected Mrs. Scot, with severe dignity. "Captain Jekyll, Mrs. Graham!"

"Mrs. Petherick said Jackall," began Mrs. Graham, in self-defence, "and so——"

"Bless you, I always do commit that ridiculous mistake," interrupted Mrs. Petherick, uplifting her dark eyebrows, "I am known for it. You must not mind me, Mrs. Graham, or you will get into disgrace. No, no, not Jackall, Jekyll, Captain Jekyll. But"—turning to Mrs. Scot—"I thought it only friendly to let you know he was coming. He did not say so to Mrs. Dunker; but, as she said to me, 'You know how he pounces upon one, dear. He will be sure to pounce upon Mrs. Scot this evening.' And so I came round to drop you a hint."

Mrs. Scot thanked her visitor rather stiffly, and that lady, having accomplished her friendly errand, soon took her leave.

"Mary," plaintively said Mrs. Scot, when the visitor was gone, "do get my salts ready, dear. The Captain does so smell of tobacco that I shall certainly be ill if I have not got them by me. I need not tell you anything

about Captain Jekyll," said she, addressing Mr. Graham, in a languid voice, on which the Captain's tobacco already seemed to be taking effect, "because he will be here directly. Mrs. Petherick and he have taken an unfortunate dislike to each other, and endeavour not to meet, but they do follow each other in a very trying manner. You have no sooner got rid of one," added Mrs. Scot, a little crossly, "than you are sure to be pestered with the other. Mrs. Petherick is generally first, and, of course ——There's the Captain," said Mrs. Scot, sinking back in her chair with a resigned air. "*Do* give me my salts, Mary."

A loud boisterous "Ha! ha!" a stamping of feet, a squaring of his shoulders that threatened every piece of furniture in his way with overthrow, and a stride that shook the house, accompanied the entrance of Captain Jekyll. He was a big man, with goggle eyes and a red face. He was tightly buttoned up, and had a general look of buckram about his bulky person. His address was bluff, hearty, and unceremonious.

"Good evening, Mrs. Scot—blooming, as usual—Miss Lily's eldest sister—ha, ha! Mrs. Graham, charmed—Mr. Graham, charmed. Saw

you at the brown house, sir—saw you hours ago—know all about you, sir, all about you. The Pethericks' gazette had told every soul in Saint Aubin about you before twelve o'clock struck. Ha, ha! an invaluable gazette, Miss Petherick."

"Mrs. Petherick, Captain," said Mrs. Scot, smelling her salts.

But the Captain only rolled his head waggishly from one shoulder to the other like an amiable bear.

"Miss, not Mrs.," he persisted, with his loud "ha, ha!" "Take my word for it, my dear madam. Mr. Petherick, whom no one in Saint Aubin ever set eyes on, is like John Doe, a legal fiction. Bless you, ma'am!" continued the Captain, with a wicked wink of his goggle eyes, "I know a lady who has been married—there's twice the spirit in her there's in an old maid," added the gallant Captain. "I am sure," continued he, with another wink, but a more reticent one, at Mrs. Graham—"I am sure that lady will agree with me about Miss Petherick when she sees her."

"But I have seen her," answered Mrs. Graham, opening her blue eyes in innocent surprise. "Mrs. Petherick has just been here."

The Captain's countenance fell. In vain he broke out into his boisterous "ha, ha!" and vowed that Mrs. Petherick—he forgot to call her Miss—was as good as a play; the mortification of not having been first was too keen to be hidden.

"Of course she has been here," said he, shifting uneasily in his chair, in evident anxiety to be off, "and of course she is gone somewhere else to tell everyone that she has seen Mr. Graham. There never was such a woman, sir—never. I daresay she is at Dunker's now."

"Oh, no," put in Mrs. Graham, before anyone could speak, "she has been there too."

"Then she is at Mrs. Morgan's," cried the Captain, starting to his feet in evident trepidation—"of course she is. Well, I could not help looking in at you, Mrs. Scot, just to see how you are; but I must go now—I really must—letters to write, you know. Good evening, Miss Lily—charmed, madam—charmed, Mr. Graham."

And with much less boisterousness, and more haste than had marked his entrance, the Captain made his exit.

Mrs. Scot languidly requested the window to be opened, and fanned herself with her pocket-

handkerchief. Lily was prettily attentive to her mother, but Jane and Louisa, who had stolen out after the Captain, came in tittering.

"Oh, Lily," said Jane, "only think!"

"I was sure of it," put in Louisa, in great glee. "The Captain asked Sarah which way Mrs. Petherick had gone."

"And he's gone after her!" triumphantly said Jane. "But Mrs. Petherick will be first."

These indecorous remarks made the fair Lily gaze with gentle severity at the giddy girls. They at once put on a demure look, which they preserved until tea was brought in.

A little before this, Miss Bertram, who had brushed her hair and made herself tidy, slipped into the room, and silently joined Lily and her sisters at the round table. She had brought her work—a piece of canvas, which looked as if it had been tossing about for weeks, and on which was begun a wreath of 'roses, faded before their time. She worked half a leaf with great ardour, then she looked at Louisa's tatting, then she examined Jane's crochet, then she went into ecstasies over Lily's lace; and so the unlucky piece of canvas slipped on the floor, and Miss Bertram unconsciously trampled on her roses, and, having picked it up, was looking

at it ruefully, when more visitors came in. One was a little, sallow, bilious man of fifty, with a sharp pair of grey eyes, and a mobile, irascible mouth. This gentleman proved to be Mr. Lennard, the godfather of Miss Lily Bertram, the widowed husband of Mr. Cowper's aunt, and the uncle of that William whom Mr. Graham had already seen, and who now came in with him. Miss Bertram, on seeing her enemy, gave him a defiant look, which William Lennard returned with an imperturbable stare. This young gentleman was introduced to Mr. Graham as Mrs. Scot's young friend and cousin, and Mr. Lennard as their friend and valued neighbour, and the one who, of all others, could tell him best about the Geraldine Bertrams.

"Of course you have seen the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold?" promptly said Mr. Lennard. "No? Why, then, what have you seen?" And Mr. Lennard raised his eyebrows. "You see," he resumed, more leniently, "this house, being inhabited by an English gentleman of ancient descent, one of whose ancestors, Philip——"

"Philibert," suggested Miss Bertram.

"Yes, Philibert Geraldine Bertram, actually figures as standard-bearer to Henry VIII. We

all here in Saint Aubin take a sort of personal interest in it."

"Philibert!" remarked Mrs. Graham—"a curious name."

"We Bertrams are all christened Philiberts," said Mr. Bertram's daughter. "I am a Philibert, Marraine."

"My dear, I hope you feel all the better for it," good-humouredly said Mrs. Graham.

"Mr. Bertram's house is highly interesting," resumed Mr. Lennard, "and he will be most happy to show it to you, Mr. Graham."

"Come to-morrow before luncheon!" exclaimed Lily Bertram, with sparkling eyes. "*I* will show you the sculptures and the gallery and the turret, and after luncheon I will take you to the prettiest wooden house in all Saint Aubin, and——"

The flow of the young lady's eloquence here received a double interruption. Mrs. Scot listened to her with evident admiration; Mrs. Graham looked amused, and William Lennard sulky; but Mr. Lennard remarked drily—"Is Mr. Bertram out of town, Lily?" And Lily Scot uttered a gentle but reproving "Darling!" which brought Miss Lily Bertram to her senses. She coloured up, took her work, and for thirteen minutes, accord-

ing to Mr. Graham's reckoning, uttered not one word. But the Bertram topic went on all the same. It seemed to Mr. Graham as if all these Saint Aubin people could talk of nothing else. The antiquity of the Bertram family, the persecutions it had endured for the faith during the reign of Elizabeth, the extinction of the title under the Stuarts, its revival in favour of a protestant branch by one of the Georges, and its final death during the reign of William IV., were all discussed, for Mr. Graham's benefit, before, during, and after tea. He was also told how the last of the Bertrams, John (and Philibert, of course), Geraldine—Bertram having uselessly revived his claim to the title,—had left England in disgust, and come to Saint Aubin many years ago; how he and his wife had died there, and been buried in the old Abbey outside the town; how their tomb, in the Gothic style, was one of the sights of the place; and how their son, the present, and, alas! the last of the Bertrams, having given up all thought of returning to a country where he could not have justice done to him, and having wedded a daughter of St. Aubin—thus gracefully did Mr. Lennard word it—who brought him the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold as a por-

tion of her dowry, had made that abode, so pregnant with historical recollections of the deepest interest to him, his final home. All this Mr. Graham listened to with the patience of good breeding; he was even tolerant of Mrs. Scot's description of Mr. Bertram's person, supererogatory though it might seem in the presence of Mr. Bertram's daughter.

"When I came to Saint Aubin," sighed Mrs. Scot, "Mrs. Bertram was still living, and I was struck with her patrician beauty. I never saw such a carriage, excepting with her son, nor such hands. It is no use denying blood, Mr. Graham. It will show itself. There are well-born people who are plain, I grant; but look at their hands—look at their hands! Mr. Bertram's hand is unique. I call it the Bertram hand. Lily Bertram, too, has it. Let us look at your little paw, Lily dear."

This was said playfully, of course, and laughing; but without the least modest reluctance, Miss Bertram held up a lovely little hand indeed, though it was rather a brown one. It was plain that a certain portion of the Saint Aubin, English at least, held Mr. Bertram as a sort of Fetish, and that this fair Lily was quite accustomed to all this

worship. She certainly had a pretty hand, she was also a pretty girl, spite the turned-up nose, which she had no doubt inherited from her plebeian mother; but what cared Edward Graham for either hand or face of Lily Bertram's? Was he not watching that other Lily's white fingers as they plied her needle and thread?—and was he not thinking how sweet and winning was the smile that flitted across her face as Miss Bertram held up her hand? And yet there was something very warm and pleasant about this little girl, and certainly not a particle of aristocratic pride.

The upper town of Saint Aubin was not gas-lit, and the gipsy-looking servant-woman took a lantern and saw Mrs. Scot's visitors to its limits. Miss Lily Bertram, who lived close by, was dropped first, before a low, broad, arched gate-way. She bade her godfather and Mr. Graham a good night, then, flinging her arms around Sarah's neck, she gave her a warm kiss as she stood on the threshold of the door, and uttered a fond and coaxing "You won't forget, Sarah, will you?" before she let her go.

"So you and Miss Bertram keep good friends, Sarah?" remarked Mr. Lennard as they walked on.

Yes, sir; we do."

"What was it you said about her the other day, 'Here's a young lady——'"

"'Here's a young lady who can sing a song, tell a story, and give an answer,' that's what I said, sir."

"Very good! and it's true, Mr. Graham, it's true, every word of it."

And all the time that they walked together, Mr. Lennard sang his Lily's praises; but he too was dropped at his own door, and Mr. Graham walked on alone, preceded by Sarah and her lantern. The night was starless, the street was dark, and the light of the lantern danced up and down the front of the gloomy houses like a will-of-the-wisp. As Mr. Graham walked on, his fancy dwelt not so much on the sweet young face of Miss Scot as on her graceful household ways. He was not smitten with her, at least he told himself that he was not; but he thought, "Ah! if a man could but win that girl, what a prize he would find her!"

"You have the gas-light now, sir," said Sarah, as they reached the arch which divided the upper from the lower town.

She turned back, and Mr. Graham went on alone. There was nothing of the will-of-the-

wisp about the sober gas-lights of the lower town ; but he missed his way three times before he reached at last the safe haven of the city of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VI.

WE all have a certain individual fashion of seeing things, and Mr. Graham's was to do his sight-seeing alone, and in the order that pleased him best. He did not choose to go and see the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold the next morning, but incited thereto by some words which Mr. Lennard had dropped concerning its romantic situation, he made his way to the old abbey of Saint Aubin, sur dun, in which the last of the Bertrams was buried. The village lay in a fissure of the cliffs, its long, straggling, and solitary street ending with the sea. A shallow but rapid river, green and clear, flowed round this little Norman nest. Thatched houses, busy mills, willows and poplars shaded its narrow banks; ducks cackled in the pools or slept on the rippling surface of the water; pigs ran about, cocks crowed on every

dunghill, and children played near the open doorways, by which mothers in striped petticoats and white caps wound silk and worsted, whilst the click of the loom within told the occupation of the husband and father. All this was very pretty. So was the Gothic church, little and old; so were the orchards with the reddest of apples weighing down their boughs, and the straggling gardens, where old-fashioned flowers grew amongst the vegetables. Edward Graham liked and enjoyed it all, but of abbey or romantic ruin he saw no sign.

At length a boy led him down a narrow lane ending in a low door; the boy pushed it open, and a glimpse of a cool green place, silent and lonely, suddenly greeted Mr. Graham's eyes. He slipped a few sous in his guide's hand, and dismissed him. The lad touched his cap and turned away, whistling carelessly. Mr. Graham had his wish—he was alone. He stood on the threshold of a wide court, planted with rows of old clipped trees, and enclosed by the abbey buildings, tall, dark, and decaying. The place thus divided from the gay, warm world without was chill and full of a green gloom. It had once been flagged, but high, slender meadow

grasses now grew between the loose stones of the pavement, shaking their plumed heads in the cool September air. Mr. Graham made his way through them, crushing them with regret, to the centre of the court. There in the shadow of the old trees, but lit up with a few gleams of the noonday sun, which hung hot and bright in the blue sky above, stood a Gothic fountain, with four slender threads of silvery water pouring from four dragon heads into the shattered stone basin below. A little bird perched on the rim was drinking, throwing back its dainty head, but it flew away on Mr. Graham's approach; the young man heard the startled rush of its wings in the boughs of a neighbouring tree; then, save for the low murmur of the water, all again was still.

How sweet, how solemn was the silence of that spot! It was, thought Edward Graham, as if an enchanter had laid all things to rest here. And that a mighty enchanter, one whose deep spell no counter charm has ever broken, had been there, he found when, turning away from the fountain, he walked round the court, and looking at the walls stained with the mildew of perpetual shade, he saw them inlaid

with tomb-stones. This cool, quiet court was one of the many palaces belonging to the angel of death. Here he had gathered his silent subjects in bygone times, and given them those quiet mansions which they seem to like so well. Here for ages he had reigned supreme, deaf to the tide of life that flowed up to the gates of his abode, and ever gazing with deep, tranquil eyes towards that far eternity where his fatal sceptre shall be broken in his hand, and the tomb on which he sits brooding, as on a throne, shall be shattered into dust.

This quiet court, with its old trees, in which birds nestled and sang love-songs in the Spring-time, with its ruined fountain, where they drank in the sunshine, was a graveyard. The deep roots of those trees sprang from, and their green boughs sheltered, graves; that waving grass grew between them, and the water, as it fell with a low song-like murmur, had no other ear to charm than the ear of the dead.

Mr. Graham went round the court, now and then reading an inscription, or pausing to feel the stillness of the place; he thus came to a low door in a cool green corner, and pushing it open, suddenly stood on the threshold of a

grey old church, in which, though it was now deserted, a faint odour of incense still lingered. The building was not large, and walking round at once behind the high altar, Edward Graham found the tombs he was seeking for in the chapel of Saint Joseph. The sunshine fell on them with a cold glare through the tall windows, whence the stained glass was all gone. They might be fine tombs, but they had a desolate look. There were but two; on one a bishop was kneeling with folded hands, and venerable head meekly bent; the other one was a handsome Gothic monument, with a long epitaph in Gothic characters, setting forth in Latin the ancient descent and many virtues of John Philibert Geraldine Bertram, and his wife, Lily de Vaux.

Whilst Mr. Graham was reading this inscription, a little sneeze, which seemed to come from middle air, made him look up rather quickly. A brown head in a white hood was swiftly withdrawn from a gallery belonging to the belfry, but of course it came back almost at once, and Mr. Graham was not much surprised to recognise Miss Bertram's rosy face. She nodded to him, then vanished again. Presently

he heard her feet pattering down a dark staircase of which he caught a glimpse through a low door that stood half open in the wall, showing him black steps climbing up in the gloom. In another moment she stood by his side, not much more tidy than on the preceding day, but with a very smart white capeline framing her round young face.

"How do you like grandpapa's tomb?" she whispered breathlessly, raising herself on tiptoe to reach his ear—"is it not beautiful? I wish they had put him kneeling like the bishop. I never saw him, you know."

Mr. Graham did not answer. He had a feeling that this little girl, who seemed to be alone here, would stick to him like a leech, and he was not mistaken. When he moved on to examine the tombs more closely, Lily Bertram moved too; when he stopped, she stopped; and when, leaving the church, he went out once more into the funereal court which lay before it, Miss Bertram went out with him as a matter of course. As a matter of course, too, she found her tongue in the open air.

"Don't you like grandpapa's tomb?" she asked; then, passing from question to state-

ment, "It is so fine," she said, "and papa wrote the epitaph, every word of it—it is in Latin, and Mr. Lennard says it is grand; and oh! Mr. Graham, I am so fond of coming here!"

"Do you come here alone?" he asked.

"Oh, no; Marie is out there knitting. Do you like grasses, Mr. Graham? I do; they are so pretty here in Spring."

She began gathering the tall slender grasses as she spoke, and being evidently of a communicative turn, she entertained Mr. Graham all the time with such interesting information as the use to which she put grasses—for the embellishment of her papa's sitting-room—how the vases in which she put these grasses were blue china, and how these said china vases were one of the old Bertram relics. There had been an Admiral Bertram in the family, and he had brought the vases from China, &c. Mr. Graham was too well-bred not to be civil, even to a little girl; but when there occurred a pause in Miss Bertram's fluency, he wished her a good morning.

"Oh! but I am going too," cried Lily, with undisguised eagerness. "I have plenty of grasses."

They walked out of the court together, Lily talking all the way up the lane; she was talking still when they came to the end of it, and found an old woman in a white cap sitting on a stone and knitting in the sun; she gave Mr. Graham a quick look of her bright brown eyes, then rose without a word and followed her young mistress, knitting as she walked behind her. Her needles went fast, but they did not go faster than Lily's tongue. Little though the young man relished the company of this fluent young lady, and pleased though he would have been to drop her civilly, he could not help being amused with her discourse. With a good deal of childishness, there was also a good deal of mother-wit and shrewdness in what this little girl said; unluckily she had something to say about all she saw. They passed by the church; Lily gave her companion its history and its legend. They met a man with a wooden leg; Lily knew how he had lost his leg, and kindly told Mr. Graham all about it. She gathered every field-flower her keen young eyes could spy on the road, and she was so good as to instruct Mr. Graham in botany as she did so. "There never was such a little chatter-

box," he thought; and yet he was not much bored, for if Miss Bertram was talkative she was not common-place. The legend came out very neatly under her hands; the man who lost his leg, who would not be chloroformed because his grandfather, who had lost a leg too, had not been chloroformed, and who smoked a pipe whilst the surgeon was amputating the limb, because his grandfather had smoked his pipe, you know, under similar circumstances, was a very living man indeed—wayward, wilful, and dogmatic, in Miss Lily's graphic speech; and there was something of their own wildness and freshness in the way in which she talked of the field-flowers she gathered, and of their favourite haunts—all of which she knew, and eagerly volunteered to show Mr. Graham. And thus Saint Aubin sur dun was left behind and Saint Aubin was reached, and Mr. Graham, still walking by Miss Bertram's side, with Marie knitting behind them, was beginning to think that he would have to walk home so escorted, when, with the exclamation, "Oh! there's Sister Martha!" Lily darted towards a sister in a black cloak and hood, who was coming towards them with a bright smile on a

very blooming, though no longer very young face.

"Oh! Sister Martha," eagerly exclaimed Lily, "why did you not come yesterday? I had something so good for your old people; and do come to-day, Sister Martha! Have you got a great deal to-day? Let me look in your basket. Crusts—nothing but crusts! Come to me, and I will give you better than that."

This much Edward Graham heard, for with a bow he hastened to make his escape; but he had scarcely uttered a pious "Thank Heaven!" when Lily, all out of breath, was once more by his side.

"How fast you walk!" she said, "I had to run to catch you. Why did you not stay to talk to Sister Martha? She is so good and so full of fun," added Lily emphatically; "but there is the house of the little sisters of the poor. We can go in and look at the old people, if you like."

Mr. Graham saw a low, straggling house. Through the half-open door he caught a green glimpse of garden, and of a few old men and women sitting in the sun. The dark figure of a young sister in black, but with a white cap

and kerchief, flitted to and fro. Mr. Graham was half tempted to go in, but Lily's company held him back.

"Not to-day, thank you," he said, to her evident chagrin. She was going to remonstrate, when her attention was suddenly diverted by seeing Mr. Lennard coming up the street, and reading his English paper as he walked along in the sun. He seemed to be absorbed in the news, and yet in a moment, and without having appeared to raise his eyes from the page, he had seen, greeted, and, figuratively of course, taken hold of the three. Indeed, to take hold of people and of things, seemed to be one of this little gentleman's attributes. Some people are loosely made—their look is uncertain, their step is unsteady, their big, awkward limbs are badly put together, and when their clumsy hands take hold of a thing you are apt to fear, especially if that thing, be valuable china, that it will come to grief. But Mr. Lennard was a wiry, compact little man, whose small, keen eye did not merely go through you like a gimlet, but also pinned you like a nail. His hand closed firmly on whatever it seized, and you need have but one fear concerning what that hand clutch-

ed so fast, that this remorseless grasp, strong as a vice, might break it. And break it rather than let it go, these bony fingers assuredly would.

New-comers are apt to be prizes in small places and colonies; a prize in that sense Edward Graham was, no doubt, for instead of walking on, Mr. Lennard folded up his paper, thrust it into his pocket, and turned back with the young man. With little wiry Mr. Lennard talking on his right hand, with young Lily on his left, her listening face in the white hood turned up to his, with Marie walking and knitting behind him, Mr. Graham was fairly a prisoner.

"I suppose I shall go back to the city of Jerusalem thus accompanied," thought the young man, amused at his own predicament, but Mr. Lennard for one had no such intention. He took his captive straight to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and informing him that of course he would see it now, as Mr. Bertram was within, he evidently did not admit that the young man could have any voice in the matter.

Everyone who has been to Saint Aubin knows

that the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold cannot be seen from the street. All you see thence as you walk along is a little Gothic archway, and an old carved gate. It is only when you cross the threshold of that gate that the quaint old dwelling stands before you, with its gallery, its turret, its tall vanes, its carved front and dormer windows, with its ivied walls and old shattered fountain, all going to a mild and picturesque decay in the Norman sun. Without heeding one word that Mr. Lennard was uttering, Mr. Graham walked on under the archway, then paused to look, and remained so several minutes, absorbed in what he saw. On one side of the court ran a low-roofed gallery with broad windows, beneath which appeared the famous basso-relievos. A graceful octagon turret still divided this gallery from the main building, but its companion, alas! was gone. The house was a small one. It was not large, and had never cared to be larger; it was only two storeys high, yet house, turret, and gallery were as much covered with sculpture as if to be thus adorned in the most costly style had been a condition of their existence. The very attic windows were dormer windows of the richest

kind, and the vane springing from the high slated roof of the turret spread its graceful leaves and flowers in dainty black lines on the blue September sky.

This exquisite relic of the Renaissance would have been disfigured by a comparatively modern wing, built where the other turret should have been, if luxuriant ivy had not climbed up the bare walls, covering them instead of carving, and young evergreen trees growing close to the flight of stone steps that led to the entrance of the house, had not spread their dark and glossy boughs on the grey stone background, hiding the cold and meagre outlines of the seventeenth century. Even that portion of the house seemed gently crumbling away. The whole place had a look of neglect. The court was untidy; the basin of the long disused fountain was filled with plants in earthen flowerpots, and grass and weeds grew close to the old walls, and even here and there between the broad flags of the court.

Mr. Graham stood looking at all this, finding it so like what he had imagined, and yet so unlike; and Mr. Lennard, Lily, and even Marie stood looking at him, watching every motion of

his eye and every movement of his features, and waiting silently till he should speak.

"Where are the heads of Francis and Henry?" he asked at length.

"Here," answered Mr. Lennard and Lily in a breath, both pointing to the wall behind him. Mr. Graham turned round and saw on either side of the arched gateway a niche with a man's bust within. One displayed the broad face and square jaw of Henry, and the other showed the no less characteristic, but more refined features of the first Francis. Neither was remarkable as a work of art; Mr. Graham gave them one look, then walked straight to the gallery, and Mr. Lennard and Lily and Marie even went with him. The basso-relievos were remarkably well-preserved, and in them you could still read very plainly the story of the great pageant of their age. Two cavalcades issuing from the towns of Ardres and Guines respectively, and each headed by its own monarch, met in the centre. Nobles and knights, priests and prelates, made a goodly show on either side. Everything was clear, spirited, and living; the men rode in very truth, the horses pranced and tossed their heads, the nobles had

a stately look; this was really Henry in the prime of his manhood, this was truly the courteous Francis raising his plumed cap as he greeted his royal brother; and there was no mistaking either king, for the leopards on the housings of the English monarch's horse were still clearly visible, and the lilies had not been effaced from those of the French sovereign.

"Well," impatiently said Mr. Lennard, "what do you think of them?"

And before Mr. Graham could answer, Lily put in breathlessly, fearful no doubt lest she should be anticipated,

"The standard-bearer there close to King Henry is Philibert Geraldine Bertram, papa's ancestor, you know."

"No, my dear," corrected a mild voice behind them, "Philibert Geraldine Bertram was not my ancestor, I am not descended from him; but he was one of the family of course, I am not going to deny that."

Mr. Graham turned round and saw, standing near them, a tall and remarkably handsome man. He wore a loose black velvet morning jacket and a broad black velvet cap, which he touched slightly to the stranger, displaying as

he did so the whitest and most beautiful man's hand (with a sparkling diamond ring on its little finger, which flashed forth brightly in the morning sun) which Mr. Graham had ever seen.

Mr. Bertram's person—for of course it was he—justified all the praise Mr. Graham had heard lavished upon it. Beauty of feature, grace and dignity of bearing, were his; and with these a calm, self-possessed, courteous manner, which is not always the attribute of ancient birth, but which, when it co-exists with it, assuredly lends it no common charm.

"Mr. Bertram, Mr. Graham, an old schoolfellow of my nephew's," Mr. Lennard hastened to exclaim in a manner which had not composure to recommend it; "Mr. Graham is an architect, and most anxious of course to see the house of Saint Aubin par excellence."

"Miss Bertram's house," again mildly corrected Mr. Bertram; adding with sad gravity, "the Bertrams have no home left in their own country, my friend."

"Yes, I know," muttered Mr. Lennard, striking his cane against the flags of the court; "a pretty mess our legislature makes of everything."

"I am happy to think, Mr. Graham, that the nature of your pursuits will enhance your enjoyment and appreciation of this really remarkable little house," resumed Mr. Bertram with the faintest touch of patronage, though both his voice and manner were very kind; "this, as you see,"—the white hand waved and the diamond ring flashed as he spoke—"this is the English procession, and that is the French one. Allow me to call your attention to the standard-bearer—not because he is a Bertram," he added, smiling, "but because he is really the most finely-conceived figure in the whole series. His seat is really remarkable. He certainly sits better than bluff King Hal, who to me seems a little, just a little, of one side. Does it not strike you so? No; ah! well, it may be a mistake of mine; but I still think the standard-bearer one of the most remarkable figures in the whole group, and I am glad you agree with me."

Mr. Graham looked slightly surprised, for he had expressed no opinion on the subject; but with another wave of his white hand, and another flash of the diamond ring, Mr. Bertram continued:

"Have you looked at the sculptures on the turret? They are really very fine. Allow me —you must stand here, a little more to the right—so. Well, now look at that picture, if I may so call it, under the first-floor window—a man and a woman reaping. The man wears the round straw hat, and the woman the close cap, jacket, and short petticoat still worn by their class at the present day. Very interesting, as you say." Mr. Graham had not opened his lips, but Mr. Bertram really did think that all silent listeners acquiesced with him, as a matter of course. "On this side of the turret we have fishermen in a boat, drawing their nets—very primitive the fishes look in the waves, certainly; farther on, boys are bathing; but the most characteristic of all these representations of rural life is the highest, almost under the edge of the roof. A traveller on horseback is parting from his friend, as you see, at the door of what really looks like a castle; a young girl passes by, carrying a burden on her head; and high up in air, above rocks, houses, and trees, a griffin is bearing a lamb away. Now what does that griffin mean? Can you tell, Mr. Graham? Have you any idea on the subject?

Monsieur de Renneville could not make it out, and La Société Archeologique de Saint Aubin has given it up. Is it an emblem of life, or is it typical of the dangers which beset travellers?—in short, what is it?"

"Why, it's a griffin, of course," said Mr. Lennard, not giving Edward Graham time to answer. "A griffin is a griffin, I say."

"Very true," replied Mr. Bertram, with mild gravity; "but a griffin may have a meaning."

Mr. Lennard gave the flags of the court a smart tap with his cane, and said tenaciously,

"A griffin's a griffin, and there's an end of it, in my opinion."

There was just a more rapid wave of the white hand, and a sharper flash of the diamond ring, as, without heeding this speech, Mr. Bertram resumed:

"The emblem which adorns the front of the house fortunately need puzzle no one. It is the famous salamander of Francis I. Very sharply cut, as you say, and in wonderful preservation. Would you like to see the gallery, Mr. Graham? This way up the steps, if you please."

They crossed the court to go up the stone

steps that led to the house. There had been another turret once, as Mr. Graham knew from De Renneville's book, and he commented with regret on its destruction.

"Yes, it was a sad pity," confessed Mr. Bertram; "and it had at one time been his ambition to rebuild that turret, but he had been obliged to give it up. He had regretted it all the more that he had meant that turret to be part of his daughter's portion."

"It was to have been opened on my wedding-day," here remarked Lily Bertram, in an aggrieved tone; whereupon Mr. Lennard pinched her cheek; and Mr. Bertram, going up the steps, said, "Yes, it was to have been opened on Miss Bertram's wedding-day," and again regretted that he had been disappointed.

They entered a little ante-room, on which several doors opened. Mr. Bertram's hand was laid on the door-handle of one, when Marie's shrill voice in the court was heard exclaiming,

"I tell you the hedge must wait, monsieur is busy."

A faint tinge of colour rose to Mr. Bertram's pale face, and apologising to Mr. Graham for deserting him, and commending him at the

same time to Mr. Lennard's care, he abruptly went down the steps. Mr. Lennard tightened his lips as he looked after him, and Lily, opening the first door to their left, said emphatically,

"This is the dining-room—please do look at the oak panels and the ceiling. Papa says they are so fine."

They were fine indeed, as Mr. Graham saw at a glance—fine, though gloomy; the whole room had a gloomy look; but he did not heed this. He went up at once to the fire-place. The chimney was of unusual size, and all of wood richly carved, and that had once been richly gilt. The smoke of many a bygone fire had tarnished its splendour, but had not effaced the crimson and azure scutcheon of the Saint Aubins, with two dainty leverets for its supporters. The carving, which was of the most elaborate kind, appropriately represented the destruction of a city by fire.

"Troy, I suppose?" said the young man, turning round to Mr. Lennard; but Mr. Lennard was gone, and he was alone with Lily.

"Oh! I daresay he wanted to see about that hedge, you know," she said; "but *I* know all

about the house. Yes, that is Troy. Will you see the gallery, or go on with the chimney, Mr. Graham? Do go on with it; and I know all about it. That's Hecuba, and this is Priam, and that's Hector——"

"Hector was killed before Troy was burned," corrected Mr. Graham.

"Well, then, it's some one else," coolly remarked Lily. "But I must take off my hood—it's so hot. Don't you find it hot, Mr. Graham? But you have no hood on, to be sure."—"I should hope not!" thought Mr. Graham, who could scarcely imagine himself in a white hood with a frill to it.—"It was dear Lily Scot made this," resumed Lily; "and if gentlemen wore hoods, she would make you one, I am sure—she is so kind. Well, then, that lady's Helen, and that bearded man is Ulysses."

"Are you quite sure of that, Miss Bertram?"

"Oh! quite—papa says so. And now that you have seen the chimney, do stand up on the table and look at the ceiling. Look—so!"

And up she skipped on the broad table of dark shining oak to encourage him by her example. But Mr. Graham neither got up on the table nor minded her much. He let her

buzz about him like a little Summer fly, and looked silently and leisurely at the ceiling, at the window-frames—at everything, for everything was full of interest, and pregnant with meaning; and whilst he gazed, Lily prattled on, explaining right and left, leaving nothing to conjecture or reverie, but giving her companion the history of all he saw.

From the dining-room they passed to the next apartment. This was the library, and shelves covered with books, a table and two chairs, were all it could boast of. Yet if he would have allowed her, Lily would have kept him here ever so long, showing him the books, telling him about her favourite authors, and how and why she liked Walter Scott, or cried over the death of Uncas, with other matters of interest equally vital. But Mr. Graham at length persuaded her to drop this theme—a favourite one apparently; and from the library they passed into the gallery.

What had once been the state apartment of the Saint Aubins, was now turned into a greenhouse. Only a few of the more delicate plants which could not bear the September nights of Normandy, were in it on this sunny morning,

and Mr. Graham could look at it all. Spite the use to which it was now put—spite the shelves, the flower-pots, the broken tools, and the careless neglect which was as visible here as in the court outside—this gallery bore as many tokens within of ancient wealth and splendour as it did without. The story of Psyche appeared on the ceiling in a series of pictures divided by rich gilt carving, and charmingly painted by some unknown reader of Apuleius. On the walls, between each broad window, were leather hangings framed by carved panels, and representing Roman heroes, and traits of Roman history stamped in relievo set off with gilding.

"I can tell you all about them," eagerly said Lily, as Mr. Graham, approaching one of these panels, began to look at it curiously, "that's Curtius, and this is Brutus, and——"

"My dear Miss Bertram," he interrupted, in a tone of pathetic entreaty, "will you leave nothing to my imagination?"

Lily, who was swinging her hood about, paused in the act with a look of surprise, and shaking back the hair from her face, gazed up at Mr. Graham in evident perplexity.

"Perhaps you would rather see the garden now," she remarked, after a pause; "I could show you the view I promised to let you see yesterday evening, you know."

Rather than go through Roman history with this indefatigible little talker, Mr. Graham acceded to this proposal. Lily, delighted at anything that promised a change, threw open one of the French windows of the gallery, and skipped down a flight of steps into a wide, green garden, with many tall trees, plenty of grass, plenty of rose-bushes, plenty of air and sunshine, and nothing else to recommend it. Beauty of design, care of cultivation, were both wanting, and as Mr. Graham saw Lily dancing on before him, with her bright head bare in the hot sun, the most unladylike of young ladies, it seemed to him that there was a secret analogy between her and this green wilderness in which she had been reared. Of course she talked as she went on, turning round her face every now and then to make sure that he was attending to her. She had dropped Roman history. A goat of hers, that was called Jeanne, and which she heard neighing, was her theme. It was a most perfect goat. Milk white, spotless, spirited, and

so intelligent! Lily Scot was so fond of Jeanne, and Jeanne adored Lily Scot! And so chatting, and keeping Mr. Graham fast all the time, she led him to the end of the garden; and when they had reached a terrace, similar to that in Mrs. Scot's garden, but far more extensive, she uttered a triumphant "There!" which the prospect below them fully justified.

Yes, it was fine, indeed; spires and city roofs rising from the green of gardens, the silvery river winding through the landscape, the blue sea meeting the blue sky. It was grand, sweet, and fair, like a picture of the old Masters, or a poet's dream, and Mr. Graham neither could nor would deny its beauty. He looked long and earnestly, and expressed his admiration in terms as warm as even Lily could desire. Her face beamed as she heard him, and she was all ardour to show him something else. What should she begin with? Her goat Jeanne, or her pigeons, or the orchard, or the famous pear-tree. Everyone who came to Saint Aubin came to look at the pear-tree. Mr. Graham said, "Indeed!" and was sure that the pear-tree was a very interesting one. Then, walking up to an old door in the wall, which was one of the

boundaries of the terrace, he praised it, asked if it was ever used, and wondered what part of the town it led to.

"Look!" triumphantly said Lily, unlocking it, "that's Mrs. Scot's door close by."

Mr. Graham nimbly crossed the threshold, and this he did with so evident an intention of not crossing it again that Lily exclaimed, alarmed, "But you have not seen the pear-tree!" Mr. Graham was afraid he could not see the pear-tree after all—not, at least, that morning, for he had to call on his aunt, and he perceived he was beyond his time, but he was more obliged to Miss Bertram for all her kindness than he could say. And so, with a low bow, he coolly walked down the street, whilst she stood looking after him with the door in her hand, blank disappointment and surprise in her face.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT a blessing that door was," thought Edward Graham, "for that little girl is simply dreadful. But what a house, what a house! De Renneville did not do justice to it. No one could. It is a gem." Once more the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold appeared before his mind's eye. He saw it all. The court with its look of neglect, the gallery with its sculptures, the carved turret, the vane on the blue sky, the dormer windows, the dining-room and its ancient chimney, all came back to him, mixing up with Mr. Bertram, his white hand and his diamond ring, and Lily dancing on before him in the garden, with her brown head glittering in the sunshine. "It is a gem, a gem of the first water!" he thought again. A gem of another kind, but of the "purest ray

serene," in Mr. Graham's opinion, was the fair young creature who stood before him as he reached Mrs. Scot's door. Miss Lily Scot was coming home from the cathedral; she had her prayer-book in one hand, and gave the other to her youngest sister Louisa. She was attired, as on the day before, in a dress of plain black silk, with a close-fitting jacket and little white collar, and nothing, thought Mr. Graham, could become her half so well or suit better the gentle gravity and quiet refinement of her aspect, than this almost mediæval costume; and yet there was nothing too serious in the sweet young face and soft dark eyes, which looked at him from beneath the little black hat with modest recognition. Her greeting charmed him by its unaffected grace and perfect ease. Nature had bestowed on this young girl, born and reared in a French provincial town, what even good society does not always give to its children. Miss Scot's manners were both natural and self-possessed. To see her move, to hear her speak, to watch her in the street or in her own home, was to feel that she could never be at fault whatever she did. "I suppose she is not perfect," thought Mr. Graham, as they entered

the house together, "but it seems impossible that she should ever commit a mistake."

And his conclusion was a shrewder one than he himself knew. Lily Scot had the gift, a rare one in youth, of discovering her own errors so quickly, and setting herself right so soon, that very few ever became aware of them. If she dropped her stitches in knitting, she did not allow the blunder to remain and disfigure her work—she undid it so deftly that no one was the wiser. If she "missed" a tart or a pie, it never left the kitchen, and something else took its place on the table. If she was wrong about a date or a locality, she went through her history or her geography a second time, and took care not to be wrong again. And so in everything Lily Scot was right, because she was determined to be so; and because she had taken that resolve early, and had faithfully adhered to it, her range was not an extensive one. What she did she did well, what she knew she knew well, and what life could not give her Lily Scot calmly and resolutely did without. She had early discovered that she had neither the time, nor, failing this, the talent required to become proficient in music, and so she had given it up,

not without a pang of regret, but without wasting years to ascertain the fact. She could just accompany her own singing, which, though uncultivated, was sweet, and that was all. The result of all this, though not the calm will and self-denial by which that result had been won, Mr. Graham saw as he watched this young girl in her pleasant household ways, and admired her sweetness and modest grace. She gave him a great sense of repose, though he was not yet a wearied man; his heart beat none the faster because she walked down the garden by his side to lead him to his aunt, but he felt as if he should like that path not to end so soon, and his eyes to rest for ever so long on that calm young face and graceful figure.

They found Mrs. Graham busy weeding, and after a few pretty words to her godmother, in which, somehow or other, Edward Graham felt as if he had a share, Lily Scot left them both. She walked back to the house with Louisa, bending down her face to hers, and talking as pleasantly, it was evident, to her sister, as she had talked to her godmother.

"You may well look after her," said Mrs. Graham, watching the direction which her

nephew's eyes involuntarily took. "She is the dearest girl I ever set my eyes on, and oh! Ned, she is just the girl you described, and I wish you would marry her."

"Do you, aunt? I wish I had the chance," he gaily and frankly answered; "but is it likely so charming a girl is not already disposed of?"

"No," triumphantly replied Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling, "she is not. I fancied Mr. Cowper was sure to be in love with her, but it seems he is not. Do marry her, Ned."

"Don't be tantalizing, auntie; and please," he added, ruefully, "do not bid me do that which I cannot possibly do."

"Ah, to be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, looking blank. "I had forgotten all about the money; of course you can't."

Mr. Graham was not in love with Miss Scot, though he felt as if he could fall in love with her at a moment's notice, so charming did he think her; yet it annoyed him to hear his aunt's prompt acquiescence in the decree he thus passed on himself, and he said, a little shortly,

"Besides, auntie, you seem to think your god-daughter has no voice in the matter.

Granted that she is pledged to none, does it follow that she has no preference?"

"Lily Scot does not care a pin about living man," said Mrs. Graham, with a decision and a want of hesitation which did credit to her faith in her own penetration. Her nephew, we have already said so, was not in love with Miss Scot, but he could not help being glad to hear this. He could not think of her now—no, that was impossible—but suppose that time were given him, might he not some day, perhaps, secure that fair prize?—might he not——

"Does anything ail you?" asked his aunt, staring hard at him.

"How so, aunt?"

"Why, you are quite flushed."

The flush on Mr. Graham's olive cheek became deeper. He started with a sense of danger. To what was he drifting? Was he forgetting his ambition and his poverty, both arrayed against love? He could not marry—he must not; he did not earn his own bread yet—what right had he to think of any woman?

"Let me tell you all I have seen to-day, aunt," he said resolutely, putting by the dangerous subject of Lily Scot; and he told his

aunt minutely the incidents of the morning, and dwelt at full length on Mr. Bertram's wonderful house, adding, by way of conclusion—"You must see it, aunt."

"Thank you, my dear boy. I see it as you speak; but what a pity it wants that turret!"

"Ah! what a pity indeed!"

"Mr. Bertram ought to have it built."

"It would cost a large sum of money, aunt."

"Let him sell his diamond ring, old dandy. You could build him up a turret in no time. Tell him so, Ned."

Mrs. Graham spoke in perfect good faith. To anticipate difficulties of any kind in a thing that she desired was impossible to her.

"He would laugh at me, auntie," replied Edward Graham, smiling.

"But you could do it," she persisted.

"Yes, auntie, I could; but again I say don't be tantalizing."

And involuntarily the young man sighed as he sauntered about the garden with his aunt still weeding busily. It is hard to be told to build a turret when you would ask no better than to do it, but have not the faintest chance of being trusted with the task—almost as hard

as to be told to marry a charming girl, when you have a hundred a year, and don't happen to earn fifty. Mrs. Graham, still busy in eradicating chickweed and shepherd's-purse from Mrs. Scot's garden, did not see matters in that light. The silly, kind-hearted woman allowed light fancies, troublesome weeds in their way, to invade the garden of her mind. "Why should not Ned build that turret and marry Lily?" she thought; "the house wants one, I suppose, and I am sure that Lily is in love with no one else. I'll see about it."

Yes, it was true, in one sense, that Lily Scot was in love with no one—not because, like Mr. Graham, she had found no one to be in love with, but because love was, like music, too difficult of attainment. As she walked back to the house, talking pleasantly to her sister, but listening to a well-known voice in the court, it could not be said of her that she was walking in "maiden meditation fancy free," and there was a meaning in the light of her eyes and in the flush of her cheek, which was not love, but might have been something at least very like it.

Lily was neither sordid nor ambitious, but she knew that she was poor, and must not

marry a poor man. Girls who have no experience of domestic economy, may be romantic and imprudent, but Lily Scot had been a thrifty manager since the age of fourteen, and the illusions which lead to such marriages could not be hers. When young Thomson, who was really a very agreeable young fellow, had danced with her evening after evening, and morning after morning had haunted the cathedral porch as faithfully as the blind beggar who sat there, she had found it hard to remain cool and unconcerned; and when after this very useless fit of adoration young Thomson went off to England and vanished from Saint Aubin, Lily had sighed with natural regret, for Mr. Thomson was a very nice young man, as girls say—as nice as he was poor. And thus it had happened more than once, for Lily Scot, being fair to look upon, had plenty of adorers, some of whom she could have liked exceedingly well, if Fortune had not forbidden it; but if this could not be, if Miss Scot had to be wiser than was pleasant, she could not help being moved now and then with the worship which her many graces excited in every manly bosom; and as she now entered the court where her cousin

William stood talking to Mrs. Scot, the flush deepened on her cheek, and the light in her eye grew softer. He was but a boy, and a rude one. She knew his faults, and told him about them very freely, though very sweetly; but he had been worshipping her for the last three years; he had been madly jealous of Mr. Thomson, and of every man who looked at her; he had held her skeins whilst she unwound them, and listened meekly to her gentle preaching; he had climbed the tallest tree in Mr. Bertram's garden to capture her tame squirrel when that little faithless truant had escaped to its topmost bough; and Lily Scot, being mortal, could not help caring a little, a very little, about the youth. Of course she would not allow herself to think of him seriously, of course she only smiled at his boyish passion; but then you see she did smile, and she did not frown. And very charmingly did she smile now as she held out her little gloved hand to the young man, looking her sweetest and her best, in his adoring eyes, until Mrs. Scot exclaimed:

"Only think, my dear, William is going away—next week—going to sea—well no, not going to sea next week, of course, but going

away from Saint Aubin for good. How odd of Mr. Lennard to send the boy off so!"

"Indeed!" said Lily, slowly.

She showed very little concern, William thought; but there he was mistaken. Lily felt the blow, and felt it far more keenly than he imagined. An unerring intuition told her that she was the cause of the young man's banishment. He was growing into manhood, and Mr. Lennard was a shrewd, wise man, and parted him from the unwilling syren before it was too late to do so. And so, though she only said "Indeed," and went on, she was thinking all the time with a pang, "I am sure I don't like him, but I might have liked him in time; and he was growing to be so nice and manly, when that foolish little Lily Bertram did not upset him; and, poor boy, he is so fond of me."

"I do wish Mr. Lennard would change his mind," said Mrs. Scot; "it is so odd to have decided upon the sea all of a sudden."

William looked at the flags of the court, and kicked the heel of his right foot against the toe of his left.

"I need not go to sea if I don't like," he said;

"but I must leave Saint Aubin." And he looked straight into Lily Scot's eyes.

Lily sighed softly, and asked if William would not come in and tell them all about it. No, William could not do that; besides, he had no more to tell; but he would look in in the afternoon—or perhaps in the evening, if they were at home. "Come in to dinner," warmly said Mrs. Scot, "and Lily shall make one of her best tarts—and you know what Lily's tarts are."

William looked at Lily again, and reading no denial in her gentle face, accepted the invitation and walked away, looking a little less miserable and downcast.

Mrs. Scot continued to wonder at Mr. Lennard's extraordinary resolve of sending his nephew away—then suddenly discovered it was the only wise thing to do, since no one in his senses ever stayed in Saint Aubin; and Lily, standing still on the same spot in the court, listened to her mother and said not one word, but thought to herself rather sadly: "He is going away, and I shall never see him again, poor boy—never!"

But life had long taught Miss Scot one of its

great lessons—submission to inevitable troubles. So she submitted to this. She entered the house, went up to her room, changed her clothes, and folded and put away her things as carefully and as leisurely as usual; then—as usual too—she went down to the kitchen, and held a long consultation with her prime-minister, Sarah Webster.

"I am going to make a tart," she said. "Mr. William Lennard dines with us this afternoon."

Sarah glanced up from the brass candlestick she was scouring to say—

"Is it true he is going away, miss?"

"Yes, it seems so," composedly answered Lily. "Are we not out of spice, nurse?"

"No, miss; we have plenty. Don't you think it a pity his uncle turns a lad like that on London, miss?"

"I believe he is going to sea. I think we have no cinnamon, nurse."

Lily was intent—or appeared to be so—upon her tart; but Sarah, still hankering after the subject of the young man's departure, hastened to declare "that they had lots of cinnamon," and again thought it "a sad pity that young Mr. William Lennard should be sent off so sudden like."

Lily Scot did not answer. She was putting on her apron and bib, and deliberately tucking up her sleeves above her little round white wrists.

"I fancy I know why Mr. Lennard is in such a mighty hurry to send his nephew off," persisted the nurse, giving her young mistress a furtive look, whilst she seemed intent on a spot on her candlestick—"he has been getting very sweet on Miss Bertram of late, and Mr. Bertram is so high and mighty a gentleman that, good friends as they are, Mr. Lennard knows it would never answer, so he takes the matter betimes, and sends the poor young gentleman out of harm's way."

"I knew we had no cinnamon," exclaimed Lily, opening the spice-box, and speaking with a raised voice and rather a high colour.

"I'll go down to Saint Aubin directly and fetch some," said Sarah, with much alacrity.

She put down her unfinished candlestick and was gone before Lily could remonstrate against this hurry. Sarah had good reason for this speed; her conscience was pricking her, and she feared lest her young mistress should read its workings in her face. She had seen what

Mrs. Scot ought to have perceived (but never had)—that the boy was growing into manhood, and that—involuntarily, perhaps,—Lily was on the dangerous point of giving womanly gold for very boyish silver. So Sarah, who had a will and a way of her own, had dropped a timely hint to Mr. Lennard a week before this day. "Oh, that's the way the wind blows, is it?" was all Mr. Lennard had said. But how could the nurse doubt that to her was owing William's exile.

"My poor darling, it is all my doing!" she thought, as she went down the street, "and it cuts you up. I can see it do, though you won't pretend it; but why will you think of a penniless lad like that!—why will you? Now——"

"Ah, how do you do, nurse?" cheerfully asked Mrs. Petherick, suddenly coming out of a broad *porte cochère* low down in the street. "And how are Mrs. and Miss Scot this morning?"

"They are very well, ma'am, thank you," guardedly answered Sarah.

Mrs. Petherick had the pleasantest way possible with servants. She was never familiar one day and supercilious the next, but always bright, cheerful, communicative, and inquiring,

as a lady who aims at being a gazette must naturally be with such useful channels of information as the servants of her friends; but Sarah was shrewd—she knew her exact value in Mrs. Petherick's eyes. "Just to find out all she can, you know" (as Sarah was wont to observe in confidence to Mrs. Dunker's English maid); and she was always on her guard with that lady. Mrs. Petherick, who would never be discouraged, airily continued: "And is poor young Lennard really going, nurse?"

"Indeed, I did not know as he was, ma'am," coolly answered Sarah, who took a perverse pleasure in leading Mrs. Petherick astray.

"And perhaps he is not, nurse," cried Mrs. Petherick, nodding. "It would be so like Captain Jekyll, to have rushed in upon poor Mrs. Dunker, pouncing upon her with that absurd story. I should not wonder if he were not now at Mrs. Scot's, upsetting her!"

She looked hard at Sarah, who but for the fear of victimizing Lily Scot would unhesitatingly have answered that Captain Jekyll had just crossed Mrs. Scot's door; but she indulged herself at least in setting the inquisitive lady all wrong, and giving the Captain a very unfair start.

the Captain's at our house,
demurely. "I just saw him
Mr. Morgan's."
said Mrs. Petherick, with sad
the Captain's infirmity. "Talk
g gossips, nurse. Well, good
my love to Mrs. Scot." And
nod she walked away.
very sly," mused Mrs. Petherick,
went up the street. "*He* can't be
's, since I was there just now. I
at Mrs. Scot's after all."
ick felt tempted to look in at her
y, but reflecting that if the Cap-
re already, he might take ad-
er presence to go off to Mrs. Mor-
read his news there, she thought
u was to forestall him by going
at lady. We are happy to state
isive line of action was attended
h success. Captain Jekyll was just
Scot's, having entered the house
on as Sarah had left it, and by
friend's door, and not losing a
king her way to Mrs. Morton's,

Mrs. Petherick won the race, so far as that lady was concerned.

Sarah, too, had her own thoughts as she went on her way. Talk of servants keeping their distance, she wished ladies would keep *their* distance, she did. If even Mrs. Petherick was the sort of lady who could be of use to Miss Lily, help her to a good husband, and so on; but nothing of the kind, Mrs. Petherick was looking out for herself—any one could see that with half an eye. I wish she were off with that William you are fretting about, my poor dear," soliloquized Sarah. "What *can* you see in *him?* If it were anyone else that could give you a home and make you happy and a lady, I'd cut my hand off before I'd interfere—you know I would. Ah! if it were him now," thought Sarah, as she saw Mr. Bertram come up the street, handsome, gentlemanlike, and patrician-looking; "some might tell you he is too old, but I'd say, 'Not a bit—not a bit.' For then you would be the lady of Saint Aubin, you would, my pet. And wouldn't she jump to have him!"

Mr. Bertram, wholly unsuspicious of the matrimonial fancies which were flitting through

the active brain of Lily's nurse, quietly stopped her to put a question. His object was to learn whether Mr. Graham was at Mrs. Scot's house or not; but he made the inquiry in phrase as polite, and words as choice, as if he had been addressing the fair Lily Scot herself; for Mr. Bertram was like Spenser's courteous knight, Sir Calidore, in whom

> "Gentleness of sprite
> And manners mylde were planted natural,
> To which he, adding comely guize withal,
> And gracious speech, did steal men's hearts away."

And if there be a virtue made to steal away, especially the hearts of the classes that are so dangerously called lower, it is surely that same virtue of courtesy. To toil for their welfare, to suffer for their wrongs, or to die for their rights, are good things; but, if you do all this, and yet fail in courtesy to them, count not on their gratitude, no—not even on their justice. You become to them as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Besides, with them, as with others, flattery will go farther than truth any day. Yet flattery, too, has her dangers, and especially is she dangerous with rude, literal, matter-of-fact people who make no allowances.

Courtesy, however, steers clear of all this; courtesy neither climbs to the heights of sacrifice or devotion, nor stoops to the unutterable baseness of deceit. It gives little substance, to be sure, but then it asks for little or none in return. It is a very safe boat. It glides smoothly over the roughest sea. It is never heavily laden, and so it never has the ungraceful motions of your sturdy ships with their precious cargoes stowed away in mighty holds. And last, not least, of its many advantages, it need not trouble itself with risks of wind and weather, and pay ever so much money to Insurance Companies.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Graham is in our garden," answered Sarah with much alacrity, her dark gipsy face brightening with pleasure at being able to give the information to this civil, handsome Mr. Bertram, who had such a white hand, and spoke so kindly for all his diamond ring, that glittered like dew, it did; and as Mr. Bertram smiled kindly and uttered his "Thank you, nurse" with a gentleness that raised the value of the words tenfold, Sarah, walking away, thought to herself:

"He wants Mr. Graham, does he! Mr.

Graham is an architect, does he want him for that? and suppose he do, and that Mr. Graham gets that turret to build they have all been raving about so long, would *he* be a good match for my pet, I wonder? I saw him looking at her last night, but then they all do, and they go away, and it all leads to nothing."

In small places and narrow circles the thoughts and plans of masters and servants tend oftener to the same goal than the former suspect. Where there are but a few beaten paths, travellers must needs journey together, whatever their degree may be, and perforce, too, they take their rest at the same inn. Mr. Bertram's house held so prominent a position in Saint Aubin, that his long talked-of plan of building a turret to it had become a staple subject with the little English colony settled there. For the last seven years that turret had been discussed by Mr. Bertram and his friends under every possible aspect, and so it came to pass that Mrs. Graham, new-comer though she was, had her plans about it, that Lily Scot's nurse had hers as well, and that when Mr. Bertram himself now sought Mr. Graham, it was with the feeling, vague as yet indeed, that

he had, perhaps, found at last the man he had been wanting so long. His attempts in that direction had been unfortunate. The Saint Aubin architect would not do on any terms; the Paris architect had been unapproachable from the outset. Who could tell that Mr. Graham had not the double gifts of talent and cheapness? Perhaps he had not; but then, suppose he had, would it not be a mortal pity if Mr. Bertram let such a chance as this slip through his fingers. Thus when Mr. Graham, leaving his aunt to her plotting and weeding, walked out into the street and there met Mr. Bertram, that gentleman fastened on him rather eagerly.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Graham," he said with that mixture of courtesy and patronage which the long homage of his surroundings had given him. "Would you mind, now that we can be alone and free to discuss the matter —would you mind favouring me with your company for a quarter of an hour or so? I should like to have your opinion about that griffin, also to have a talk with you concerning a few other matters. Are you at leisure?"

Mr. Graham's dark Italian eyes lit involuntarily, and his heart leaped as he was thus ad-

dressed. It was not likely, but still, if it were possible! If a task, such a task as is the making of a man's professional fame were really before him! He did not think of the money, poor though he was, but with all the grasping covetousness of strong ambition, his thoughts flew at once to the success of the undertaking and its consequences. Mr. Graham, however, was a self-possessed man, and it was with civil composure that he expressed himself willing to go back to Mr. Bertram's house and discuss that matter of the griffin with him. This time no one interrupted them. Mr. Lennard did not appear, and Miss Lily, unconscious of the opportunity she lost, was bestowing her society and conversation on some rabbits. The court was quiet, and the old house seemed to bask in the sunshine. A flock of white pigeons wheeled around the graceful vane of the turret, or cooed drowsily from some invisible dovecot, and Mr. Bertram could descant on the griffin at his leisure.

"I was obliged to leave you somewhat suddenly this morning, to my great regret, Mr. Graham—to my great regret," remarked Mr. Bertram, in his kindest tone. "I should have

liked to talk more fully on the subject of that griffin—poor Mr. Lennard, an excellent friend and neighbour of mine, Mr. Graham, but matter-of-fact—matter-of-fact—now what do *you* think of that griffin ?"

He laid that white hand of his with the long slender fingers on Mr. Graham's arm, and bent his handsome blue eyes on Mr. Graham's face as he spoke.

"There *is* something in blood and birth," thought the young architect, with involuntary admiration of the bearing of the man, but answering Mr. Bertram's question, he said, candidly,

"I really can offer no interpretation. No man who is not intimately acquainted with the local history and old traditions of this part of France is likely to make even a correct guess."

Mr. Bertram looked pleased with this frank and modest answer, and declaring that it was very properly put, he kindly gave the young man the benefit of his experience. Mr. Graham listened to him with some amusement, and yet with some interest too. If this griffin was Mr. Bertram's hobby, he certainly made the best of

it, and rode it with great skill and no little fancy. All that has ever been written or conjectured about griffins he had at his finger ends, and used to excellent purpose, showing, without a particle of ostentation, that he was a well-read man and an accomplished scholar. He ended, however, by leaving the griffin pretty much where he had found him, and addressing himself to the object he really had in view, the turret, he remarked,

"My private opinion, Mr. Graham, is, that the griffin is typical of falsehood or treachery. It was so in Gothic art, and though this is more Renaissance than Gothic, it is Renaissance on which Gothic has left its stamp."

"The vitality of Gothic is one of its marvels," said Mr. Graham. "I have found it co-existent with Elizabethan architecture. Our ancestors built mediæval churches long after the Middle Ages were over, and in many parts of England cottages varied so little in character for four centuries that an expert only—other data being wanting—can distinguish between the work of the fourteenth century and that of the eighteenth."

"Very interesting!" murmured Mr. Bertram.

"I like Gothic. If you have time to spare, Mr. Graham, I will show you a little design of the turret I had then a fancy to build. I should like to have your opinion of it. I have given up the project, but still I should like to have your opinion."

Mr. Graham's dark eyes lit again as he heard this, but he simply said he was at Mr. Bertram's disposal; and so Mr. Bertram went up the steps and vanished under the porch, to fetch the "little design," and Mr. Graham remained outside, looking with a beating heart at the old house in the warm sunshine.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BERTRAM soon appeared again with a good-sized portfolio under his arm.

"I have brought you a little sketch by Monsieur Duhamel, our local architect, a very clever man," said he, patronizing Monsieur Duhamel at a distance; "but he and I could not agree. I am all for Gothic, Mr. Graham, and, of course, so are you."

"Not in England," promptly answered Edward Graham, who did not like his opinion to be taken for granted. "What is beauty elsewhere becomes deformity in our climate. When our ancestors raised Gothic monuments, cities were no larger than villages. Moreover, in their virtuous horror for coal, mediæval legislators made the burning of it a capital offence in London."

"Very true," said Mr. Bertram. "I believe that a man was actually tried, convicted, and executed for that motive only—I have read so somewhere."

"And now that we burn coal," resumed Mr. Graham, "we have the result: freestone decays in the London atmosphere. We use it; we lavish upon it ornament, to which that stone lends itself so easily, and smoke and soot soon do their work. Look at our Houses of Parliament; the stone of which they were built had been selected by a Royal commission of scientific men, yet they began to decay long before the building was finished, and chemistry had to be called in to arrest the evil. The acids of the London atmosphere are simply destructive; our porous, absorbent stone has no power to resist them. Besides, of what use are crockets, finials, and spandrils, when soot has invaded their delicate beauty before a few years have passed over them?"

"But you would not object to Gothic here!" exclaimed Mr. Bertram.

"Of course not. What have you to fear here with pure air and no smoke?"

"True! Yet, Mr. Graham, Monsieur Duhamel

was against Gothic. This is his design: the ground-plan of the turret, a perpendicular cut of it, and the turret itself as it would have appeared when completed and added to the rest of the building."

Mr. Graham looked at a water-colour drawing of the house, showing it with two turrets instead of one. The second turret was the exact counterpart of the first, but the rich carving, the quaint basso-relievos, were absent from its walls; these looked cold, plain, and bare in the strong sunlight which Monsieur Duhamel had thrown on the façade of the old house, as if to show with uncompromising sincerity what the result of his labours would be. Edward Graham shook his head.

"There must be relief in architecture," he said, "and I see none here. We get this relief by the light and shade of mouldings or carvings. These bare walls would not do, Mr. Bertram. The contrast between them and the rest of the building is too great."

"So I told Monsieur Duhamel," exclaimed Mr. Bertram; but he did not add that a great unapproachable Paris architect, whom he had consulted, had expressed exactly the same

opinion as Mr. Graham, and almost in the same words; "only, Mr. Graham, where is the remedy?"

Mr. Graham smiled.

"Build your turret on the pattern of this one," he said, glancing towards that which stood so perfect and graceful before them, "and have basso-relievos similar in character and equal in execution to these; you could not find a better model."

Mr. Bertram drew himself up a little stiffly.

"I have not a fortune to spend, Mr. Graham," he said; "but of course," he added, relaxing in his tone, "you could not be expected to know that, and you naturally thought that the last of one of the oldest English Catholic families was in a different position from that which I occupy. If I enjoyed my rights, indeed—but I do not wish to trespass on your attention with such purely personal matters. Suffice it to say that my means will not allow me to indulge in anything of the kind; if I have a turret, it must be a plain one."

"And that will not do."

"Is your advice to leave the place as it is?" asked Mr. Bertram, with the slightest possible

touch of superciliousness in his suave voice, and a curl—a very slight one indeed—of his handsome Greek lip.

"I beg your pardon, I do not take the liberty to advise," modestly and frankly replied Edward Graham. "I only speak in the abstract."

"Then pray let us consider this matter under its practical aspect," condescendingly remarked Mr. Bertram, smiling. "What suggestions have you to offer?"

"Three courses are open to you," quietly said the young man. "To leave the place as it is —true, this modern addition is really out of character with the rest of the building; but Nature is a great magician; and that ivy, so rich, so luxuriant, hides the bare plaster, and gives beauty to downright ugliness. Yet, if you object to this——"

"What else have I been saying?" asked Mr. Bertram, in an injured tone.

"If you object to this," continued Edward Graham, "you can build a turret like the one before us; you can have basso-relievos in every available space, and spend, of course, a large sum of money. The third plan would be to have the turret without the basso-relievos——"

"I thought you objected to bare walls, Mr. Graham," interrupted Mr. Bertram.

"They need not be bare. You can have plenty of Gothic ornament of the choicest sort, without having basso-relievos trying to compete with these. They are very fine, but their chief interest is historical. They tell us the story of their age. No modern work could have that charm. To imitate them would be a costly mistake. With mere Gothic ornament, which is very beautiful in its way, you have neither such cost nor such risk to fear."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Bertram tied the strings of the portfolio, and carelessly placed it on one of the sunlit steps near which they were standing.

"Mr. Graham," he said at length, laying one white hand on the young man's arm, whilst the other flashed the diamond ring, "I will state the case fairly and openly to you. I have a trifle to spend on this fancy of mine. I could not do it with Monsieur Duhamel, who is expensive, though provincial. You have talent, though you are a beginner. Why should not you and I come to terms? I can spend—say twenty thousand francs. Perhaps you will

make a few inquiries, and see if you can do the thing for that money."

Edward Graham looked keenly at Mr. Bertram, then said deliberately—

"Mr. Bertram, I am, as you say, a beginner, and I will rate my services as cheaply as any man. My time and skill you shall have at your own valuation. If I build your turret, I will do it—not for profit, but for the honour of having done it."

"Very gentlemanlike, and very properly put," murmured Mr. Bertram.

"But your proposal," continued Mr. Graham, "involves risk which you are better fitted to meet than I am. You have quarries here, and skilled workmen. Why not undertake this yourself, and——"

"Impossible," interrupted Mr. Bertram. "I am no judge of stone, no judge of building, of a good or bad workman. Moreover, I should like to be out of the dust and din of building—I should like to travel. My architect, if I have one, must undertake the whole thing."

"Is there no builder here with whom you could come to terms?" asked Edward Graham, after a while; "no man who could do this from

my plans and designs, of course—but with whom you could deal, and——"

Again Mr. Bertram interrupted him, this time almost sharply.

"Mr. Graham, it is impossible that I should attempt to deal with these people. Monsieur Gentil, the builder, is a perfect bear, and I cannot remember without horror"—(the diamond ring flashed quiveringly)—"a conversation which he and I had on this very subject. He might, nay, he would certainly attempt to impose upon you, but you could easily defeat him, whilst I might as well enter a brigand's cave as put myself in that man's hands. No, Mr. Graham, it was wrong, it was imprudent in me to broach this matter at all, but I will deal with you, or with any other gentleman, never with men of the class of the very improperly-named Monsieur Gentil. So pray let this be final. Perhaps you will give my proposal some consideration. I trust no harm has been done. I know that I for one cannot regret the very pleasant chat which we have had this morning."

Mr. Graham smiled, bowed, and took his leave, without saying whether he would or would not give Mr. Bertram's proposal any

further consideration, but in reality the subject was one on which he had no doubt. Whatever difference there might be in the cost of material or the price of labour between England and Saint Aubin, the sum mentioned by Mr. Bertram was wholly inadequate, and this thing could not be.

"It was a chance, a glorious chance," he thought, walking down the street—"such a chance as is often a man's making; but I knew it was a Fata Morgana dancing before my eyes —yes, all the time I knew it, and I am not disappointed."

We cheat ourselves so. We tell ourselves that we are not disappointed, that we never expected this thing or that one, and yet we think about it and turn it over in our minds, and paint pictures of what might have been, and listen to the lures of the charmer, still declaring all the time that we are not disappointed. Mr. Graham, no wiser than another man, fell into that snare. He did think of that turret, he did build it, so to speak, he saw it when it was built, and though he went over Saint Aubin and saw many new things, he could neither go on with a sketch he had begun, nor

attempt another. Suddenly it occurred to him that it was absurd to linger among wooden or stone houses, and not go down and look at the port, the shipping, and the beach. Of course it was this omission which was distracting him. Whereupon Edward Graham turned his back upon mediæval architecture, and went down through the Basse-ville to the port of Saint Aubin.

The old Norman town, though it was dying, commercially speaking, was not dead yet. There was still traffic in its streets, there was still shipping in its port, but the traffic had lost its look of breathless hurry, and the ships seemed to linger lazily on their moorings, as if time were for ever their own now. Not so could it have been when these grand old churches, when these stately houses were reared in the streets of the old town. But the story of Venice is enacted again and again as we who look on learn to know.

The British colony had set its mark on Saint Aubin. As he went along the quay, Mr. Graham read in the first-floor windows of one of the modern stone houses built there, the words, READING-ROOMS, in large yellow letters, and as a

living commentary upon them he saw two unmistakably British hats and heads buried in the *Times*. Then one of the English churches, the evangelical one, as he learned later, was the little prim-looking edifice of which he got a glimpse in one of the by-streets; and last, though not least, the large unfinished casino greeted him as, leaving the port behind him, he went down to the sandy beach. Here he found a long row of bathing-machines, a little girl knitting in the sun and watching the drying of "costumes" belonging to the bathers; then beyond this nothing but the long low line of sand spreading out to the sea.

The tide was very far out, the sea was pale and blue and still, the beach lonely, the coast uneven without being picturesque, the day calm and golden, as September days often are before equinoctial breezes have begun to blow. Mr. Graham walked on without a purpose, and little by little the pleasant stillness of the day lured him away from that quiet shore, where there was so little to compel his attention, to that world of his own thoughts which he had come there to shun. He could not help it; the sea, the beach, the coast faded away, and once more Mr.

Bertram's house, and the turrets, the built and the unbuilt one, flitted before his eyes, and echoes of Mr. Bertram's talk and of his own rang in his ears.

"I shall go home and dine," thought Edward Graham; but even his dinner did not calm his mind, nor his after-dinner walk either, though that extended far into the green Norman country, and by the silvery windings of the river; and so it was natural that, after being thus haunted by that one provoking fancy through the day, Mr. Graham should dream that night of a white stone turret, brand-new and richly carved, and that a vague remembrance of his morning conversation with his aunt should show him the graceful head of Lily Scot looking down at him pensively from the first-floor window.

Edward Graham, however, was not given to day-dreaming, and so when he woke and got up he could laugh at those visions of the night, and say to them, "Begone, I have had enough of you!" Vain exorcism. He had taken his sketch-book, and was opening his door to go out, when, to his surprise, he found himself face to face with Mrs. Graham.

"And are you actually coming to see me, auntie?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my dear boy; but you were going out. I have only a few words to say, and I can say them here on the landing. When is it to be?—when are you going to begin? I daresay you were coming to tell me, only I always was of an impatient temper."

"But, auntie, when is what to be?"

"Why, Mr. Bertram's turret, of course."

"My dear aunt, what could make you think of such a thing?"

"You don't mean to tell me there is nothing in it, Ned? Why, little Miss Bertram, Lily, as they call her, was watching you and her father from a garret window all the time, and she saw Mr. Bertram showing you the plans, and overheard the best part of your conversation, and she came in and whispered it all to Lily Scot in the evening."

"Miss Bertram is a shrewd young lady," drily replied Mr. Graham, "but she heard too much or too little, Mr. Bertram and I did talk of this matter, but nothing came of it."

Even in the gloom of the landing on which they stood Edward Graham could see how blank looked his aunt's open face as he uttered the words. But to follow out her own ideas pertinaciously was one of this lady's character-

istics, so she almost at once veered round to her own view of the subject, and it was quite gravely that she said, "Are you sure of it, Ned?" And when he stared in frank surprise, she pushed open his room door, and entering, took a chair, and continued, in the same even tone, "Tell me all about it, my dear boy."

Mr. Graham obeyed. Still standing with his sketch-book under his arm, he gave his aunt an abridged though correct account of all that had passed between himself and Mr. Bertram.

"Well," she exclaimed, when he ceased, and brightening very much as she spoke, "that is just what Lily says—you are to have the building of the turret."

"But, auntie, don't you understand that the money——"

"Never mind the money," she interrupted, eagerly, "I can let you have plenty."

"Aunty, do you want to make Mr. Bertram a present of *your* money?"

This view of the subject naturally sobered Mrs. Graham. She looked blank once more, but by some mysterious process of mental logic known to herself alone, she was not convinced, for she resumed, after a brief pause,

"I wish you could manage it, Ned. Don't laugh at me, my dear boy, but I have set my heart on your marrying Lily Scot, unless indeed you should have taken a dislike to each other. She is the dearest girl I ever knew, and would be the greatest treasure a man ever had. I wish you could have seen her yesterday evening. We had that bearish William, who is going off to sea, at dinner—well, Lily was admirable to the boy. So sweet, so mother-like, so gentle, and so good she was, and all without show or effort. She is the dearest girl, Ned, and I do wish she were yours."

"Thank you, aunt," he could not help saying with some warmth.

"Well, then, do build that turret, my dear boy. You can make a fine thing of it, I know, and——"

"But, auntie," he interrupted, with a vexed laugh, "how can I do it and be a loser. Mr. Bertram has not money enough to spend, that is the mischief."

"But how can you be sure that the sum he mentions will not do?" said his aunt, a little tartly—"have you tried?—have you asked anyone? Saint Aubin is a cheap place for

living, why should it not be cheap for building? Why not see that builder? Now promise me that you will see him, and not give this up without having tried every chance?"

Mr. Graham hesitated. He was a practical man, and never liked allowing his mind to dwell on impracticable matters, whatever their nature might be. He thought it both unprofitable and pernicious to do so in this particular instance. He had come to Saint Aubin to work and study hard for a few days, surely not to waste thought and time on a thing that was impossible.

"Well, of all obstinate fellows," began his aunt, a little hotly.

"Don't be angry with me, aunt," he interrupted, smiling. "I shall see Monsieur Gentil this very day, if I can; but it will all end in nothing."

"And mind what I say," replied his aunt, rising, and looking prophetic, "it will end in something, and you will marry—never mind, I know what I mean."

"Auntie, I have no objection to that portion of your prediction." replied Mr. Graham, half in jest, half in earnest; "but of that, too, I say it will all end in nothing."

"And I say you know nothing about it."

"Oh! aunt, what profound truth there is in *that* remark."

CHAPTER IX.

MONSIEUR GENTIL lived at the other end of Saint Aubin, in a stone and brick house, which did little credit either to his taste or fancy. Monsieur Gentil was a practical man. He did not care the smoke of one of his own cigars for taste or fancy. He had portfolios full of either commodity at the command of the ladies and gentlemen who required his services.

Did they want a real Swiss châlet of carved wood to overlook the blue sea which skirted the shores of Saint Aubin? Monsieur Gentil could build them one up in a trice, as neat and as brown as if it had been cut out of gingerbread. Did they wish for a feudal castle on a small scale, with grey stone battlements and frowning portals?—Monsieur Gentil had that, too, at

his beck. He had Moorish villas with patterns from the Alhambra on the walls; he had Renaissance châteaux—nay, he had even—all from London, as he boasted—Tudor and Elizabethan mansions for the English colonists, who, as usual, liked to carry the national architecture with them, and who, if they did not choose to live in the land of their fathers, chose at least to dwell in houses such as their fathers had lived in.

All this Monsieur Gentil could and would do for you, provided you required him to add or to change nothing. He was willing to build, but he declined to invent. Could he not do it once? asked a simple-minded person. Monsieur Gentil stared. Why, of course he could; nothing was easier than invention, but Monsieur Gentil had no time for it. He was a builder; he would have undertaken Nineveh, Babylon, and the Tower of Babel itself, on reasonable terms—he would not have shrunk from the Pyramids of Egypt—but such waste of time as invention implied Monsieur Gentil scouted.

Mr. Graham found this practical man smoking a cigar in his own back garden—an open, sunny space, where three beds of garish flowers

flaunted in the sun. Monsieur Gentil greeted his visitor with that sort of cordiality which, when it comes from one stranger to another, is only a form of ill-bred familiarity, and twirling Mr. Graham's card all the time between his thumb and forefinger, he informed him airily that he was charmed to see him, and was quite at his service—quite at his service.

Mr. Graham bowed, but was not charmed with Monsieur Gentil's appearance—indeed, that low, narrow, stubborn forehead, those little black eyes, that seemed to be twinkling through small round holes, that turned-up nose and large strong mouth of the man before him, all expressed will and a certain shrewdness, but had never been intended to charm the eye of any gazer. So in the briefest speech which civility allows Mr. Graham explained his errand.

"I see. I should be the builder, and you the architect," said Monsieur Gentil, glancing at Mr. Graham's card, "and you, and not Mr. Bertram, are to be my employer, and you wish to know how much such a turret will cost. Well, Monsieur, Monsieur Bertram went to Monsieur Duhamel, and they did not agree;

and he had a talk with a Paris architect, and they did not agree; and he had another talk with Monsieur Cowper, Monsieur Lennard's nephew, and Monsieur Cowper and I went over the matter together, and the figures are still here," added Monsieur Gentil, tapping his little brown forehead significantly. "I need not trouble you with the items; the total sum is thirty-five thousand three hundred and fifty-seven francs, eighty-three centimes. I put in the centimes for the humour of the thing," facetiously added Monsieur Gentil, "but you may call it thirty-five thousand three hundred and fifty-seven francs. For that sum, I said to Monsieur Cowper, you will have a stone turret tall, strong, and well-built, of the best of stone, and the soundest of wood; and when I put the key of the door in your hand, you will confess that Monsieur Gentil is a man of his word."

Richard Cowper and Edward Graham had studied architecture together under the same master. It was then that the strong dislike of the one for the other had begun. Young Cowper had left architecture for the law, and though Edward Graham had persevered in his first course, he could not feel much surprised at

hearing the name of his former companion in conjunction with Mr. Bertram's turret. Yet his eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed as Monsieur Gentil spoke—for when was strong prejudice a reasonable feeling?—and it was with some asperity that he said:

"It does not follow that Monsieur Cowper's conception of the turret and mine are similar; therefore——"

"Very true," interrupted Monsieur Gentil. "His was a plain turret. You want ornament, I know. Well, Monsieur, you may go to any price. Give me your designs, and we shall come to terms," graciously added Monsieur Gentil. "I will show Monsieur Duhamel that if he gets on without me, *I* can get on without him. He undertakes to build," added Monsieur Gentil, in an injured tone, "and look at Baron Monier's château! It fell to pieces twice—a house of cards, Monsieur, a house of cards; whereas, what I build is rock, Monsieur, rock. You fear we cannot come to terms about the turret. Well, I fear so too. Monsieur Bertram is not rich, you know, and the turret, once you go into carving, becomes expensive. I said so to Monsieur Cowper, a most agreeable

young man. I am sincerely grieved that we cannot come to terms, but charmed to have made your acquaintance."

And so with Monsieur Gentil, grieved and charmed, and with Edward Graham, neither much surprised nor much disappointed at the result of this interview, the two men parted.

"Well," thought the young man, as he walked away, "if Cowper wanted to dabble once more in architecture, he had his answer; as to that, so have I had mine. And now will auntie be satisfied?"

Satisfied in no sense of the word was Mrs. Graham when on the following day she learned the result of her nephew's interview with the builder. She had set her heart on two things, and the accomplishment of one she made dependent on the success of the other. She wanted her nephew to marry her god-daughter. He could not do so on his present means, *ergo* he should build Mr. Bertram's turret, and making money thereby, become in due time the husband of Lily Scot. She had hinted as much to Mrs. Scot, and that lady had seemed charmed. The profession of an architect was the very one she preferred; for architecture was akin to art, but

so much more steady than art, &c. Lily Scot herself, to whom Mrs. Graham imprudently spoke more openly than to her mother, had not discouraged her kind godmother's fancy. She had blushed and smiled, and said, "Dear godmamma, where is the use of it, since even if Mr. Graham cared about me, and I cared about him, we are both, as you say, so poor." But she had raised no other objection than this one of poverty, perhaps because she felt none. She was convinced that nothing would come of this dream, nothing more than had come of every other affair of the kind. It would be with Mrs. Graham's nephew as it had been with young Thompson, as it was now with poor William Lennard. He would admire her, like her perhaps, and he would go away and she would remain in Saint Aubin, and be the belle of the place till the light of youth died out of her dark eyes, and its roses faded from her cheeks, and she was Miss Scot (Lily no longer), and "poor plain Miss Scot" in time, and, who knows, "old Miss Scot" on some future day. Mrs. Graham was wise enough to set no great store on Mrs. Scot's encouragement, and she was shrewd enough to feel that Lily's candour was

rather lukewarm, so far as any preference of Edward Graham went, but she was not either sufficiently clear-sighted or mistrustful to resist the secret influence of a third person.

It would be worth while for some philosophic, inquiring mind to set down in plain figures the statistics of domestic influence in this world of ours. To what extent, for instance, do we or our servants rule each other? Who is the real master—the one who pays or the one who receives wages? We knew a rich lady who could never eat chicken because her cook disliked it. Everyone knows, or has known, some one who kept a carriage, but who dare not disobey his or her coachman. The contest for power and supremacy, which leads to national wars, and which in one sense is always going on around us, between parent and child, between husband and wife, between brethren, and between man and man, is never carried on more determinedly than between master and servant, or mistress and maid. Who shall have the upper hand? That, from the first day to the last, seems to be the point at issue. Servants are often beaten, and get the worst of the battle; but often, too, they win the day:

partly because so many of the means of victory are in their power, and partly, too, because their tenacious, stubborn, ignorant minds are not distracted from the one object in view, as are minds more refined. And then why deny it? Is not vigour often found on the side where pliancy should be? When Eleanor Galigaï was asked, on her trial, by what magic arts she had gained that ascendancy over her mistress, Mary of Medici, which ended so fatally for both, she could answer, with truth as well as with pride,

"By the power which a strong mind naturally has over a weak one!"

Mrs. Graham was not weak, but she was weaker than Lily Scot's nurse; moreover, she laid herself open to such practices as that faithful but subtle gipsy-faced woman might be tempted to try upon her, by the rare openness of her nature. Concealment of any kind was difficult, if not impossible, to Mrs. Graham; and what is there, after all, in a house which servants, when so minded, do not hear or see? Sarah had happened to enter the sitting-room when that little tattling lady, Miss Bertram, was whispering her news in Lily Scot's ear.

Sarah and Lily Bertram were fast friends, and it was the easiest thing in the world for the nurse to know by the next morning as much as Mr. Bertram's daughter knew. That was not much in reality; and Sarah, not satisfied, tried Mrs. Scot, when she took her up a letter. It was easily done. Lily's mother was one of those ladies who, like the princesses of classical tragedy, must needs pour their joys or their sorrows into the bosom of some humble *confidente*. Sarah was trustworthy and devoted—surely Mrs. Scot could not place her confidence better than in this old, faithful, and attached domestic. So concluded the lady, never suspecting that whilst the nurse was uttering her demure "Ay, ma'am," and "To be sure, ma'am," or "It stands to reason, ma'am, that you are all right," she was laying secret plans of her own for the success of the scheme which even Mrs. Scot only considered as yet as mere speculation. "Poor dear Mrs. Graham," said Mrs. Scot, with kind condescension; "it is natural she should want such a girl as Lily for her nephew; but much as I like her, I fear the match is not good enough—the young man is all very well indeed, gentlemanlike and nice-

mannered, but then has he got a position?"

Now the *éclat* of Mr. Bertram's name, family, old descent, and position had dazzled even Sarah in her humble sphere, and she could not imagine that the man who built for that peerless gentleman would not be a made man. So burning to know how matters stood, and to help them on if need be, she ventured to sound most carefully indeed Mr. Graham's aunt, and so far as she could to help that guileless lady to "see things the right way."

Unluckily, however, for the cause she wished to serve, Sarah Webster was not merely a woman of strong will, she had also a strong, though rude and uncultivated imagination. This often ran riot, and was the more dangerous faculty that its possessor took her fancies for facts, and, like Robespierre, believed every word she uttered.

"And how do you like Mr. Bertram's house, ma'am?" she asked of Mrs. Graham, when that lady came down to the kitchen on the afternoon of the day that followed her nephew's conversation with Mr. Bertram. That Mrs. Graham had been to look at the house, Sarah knew, for she had seen Lily Bertram taking her to it an

hour before, and so she thought she could venture on the question without creating suspicion.

"Oh! it's all very well," absently replied Mrs. Graham. "Have you got a flat iron, nurse?"

"To be sure, ma'am, I have; but, la! ma'am, what is the matter with your forehead?"

"Why, I have got a new bump," gaily replied Mrs. Graham; "went and knocked myself against my own door, so please let me have a flat iron. I want to keep the thing down if I can."

Sarah had no faith in the flat iron, but she did not say so: the flat iron would do to keep Mrs. Graham below, so she gave her the largest and smoothest iron in her collection; and whilst Mrs. Graham stood gravely applying it to her forehead, in the delusive hope of subduing the bump which had appeared there, Sarah resumed her attack.

"Yes, ma'am, as you say, it's all very well, but it is a pity it wants that turret, is it not? Mr. Bertram is the nicest of gentlemen, but he is crotchetty, and so he won't have it built."

"I daresay it is an expensive affair," remarked Mrs. Graham, nodding gravely.

"Oh! ma'am, 'taint that—Mr. Bertram is very rich, and Miss Bertram, whose house it is, is richer still; but Mr. Bertram is crotchetty, and he would not trust the Saint Aubin architect, nor the Paris architect; and, as Mr. Lennard says, he'll never have a turret till he has built one himself."

"I think I may remove that flat iron," remarked Mrs. Graham—"I find it heavy."

"Oh! ma'am, the bump is ever so big still," eagerly exclaimed Sarah; "but do have this chair, ma'am—it is Miss Lily's own, and a very good one."

Mrs. Graham sat down, and Sarah resumed—

"I don't mean any disrespect to Mr. Bertram, but I do say that rich people get crotchetty, and that's why Mr. Bertram's house can't get a turret to it."

Mrs. Graham still sat holding the flat iron to her bump, feeling rather perplexed by these remarks of Lily's nurse. It was very flattering, to be sure, that this fastidious Mr. Bertram should have thought of her nephew for that turret; but if he really was so rich, why would he not give poor Ned *carte blanche*, instead of making the thing impracticable by limiting him as to price.

"Is Mr. Bertram stingy?" she asked.

"Oh! ma'am, he is ever so generous. He subscribes to all their societies here, and he is to find half the money for the Casino, and he gave a dinner to the Orpheons—why, all Saint Aubin could tell you so—he is quite an open-handed gentleman."

"And yet I have been told," boldly declared Mrs. Graham, "that he could not agree with his architects because he would not pay them enough. How do you make that out, nurse?"

"I don't make it out at all, ma'am," deliberately answered Sarah, "for I don't believe it. Mr. Bertram may be crotchetty, but he would not do a mean thing—he is too much the gentleman for that; but you see, ma'am, these other gentlemen may have wanted to make too much out of him, or they may not have set the right way about it. I know the Paris man, and he was a stuck-up one, with his eye-glass in his eye, that he was—I know he would have nothing to do with the building; he would do it all on paper, as it were, and run up from Paris once a month to see how it was going on, then put it by, maybe, for a year. As to the Saint Aubin man, Monsieur Duhamel, no

wonder Mr. Bertram would not trust him, when everything he does falls to pieces before it is finished. I'd live in a hovel," said Sarah, with much energy, "before I'd let Monsieur Duhamel build me a house. As to Monsieur Gentil, he can't do it—he be only a builder. You see, ma'am," continued Sarah, her black eyes sparkling under her dark eyebrows, "they none of them have the spirit that's wanting. If I were Mr. Bertram, I'd go to Maître Jacques Cœur, who owns all these fine quarries, and I'd get my stone from him, and I'd go to Maître Louis Renaud, who is the best carpenter in the place, and put that dainty little brown house together, and I'd make my bargain with these two, and I'd build such a turret as had never been seen."

The woman was all eagerness, all ardour; she forgot that she was a servant, and earned twelve pounds a year; she forgot even Lily and her own object. She owned the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold for the time being, and as she spoke she did really build up such a turret as even a mediæval architect might have been proud of. Mrs. Graham's suspicions had been slightly roused by the per-

sistency with which Sarah kept to one theme, but they died away as she saw her so ardent. There was a mania in Saint Aubin about Mr. Bertram's house, and Sarah had caught it like the rest, that was all.

"Will you have another flat iron, ma'am—a cooler one?" said Sarah, sobering down, and thinking it best to change the subject.

"No, thank you; I daresay my bump is all right," replied Mrs. Graham, putting down the flat iron and rising to go; "but what were you saying about the brown house and a carpenter? I thought the brown house was old."

"Old as the hills, ma'am; but it had to be taken to pieces two years ago and put together again, and it was Maître Louis Renaud who did it, and surely after that he is equal to anything."

Mrs. Graham looked bewildered. Wooden houses that were taken to pieces and put together again, were a mystery to her. So she asked for explanation, and got a satisfactory account of the whole affair. It appeared that the brown house had at one time been considered worthy of removal to another site, so it had actually been taken asunder, cleaned up,

and transferred to the Jardin Public of Saint Aubin; but once there the poor little brown house had proved a brand of discord in the Municipal Council—one half had voted that it should be removed as unsightly, and the other half that it should stay, as being fair to see; and so the war went on for a year, till a councillor died, and the member selected in his stead gave his casting vote against the brown house, which was forthwith ejected and restored to its mediæval birthplace—the dingy court where Edward Graham had found it.

"This is a queer place," thought Mrs. Graham, as she heard the story; "and they are a queer people, these Saint Aubins, but clever, decidedly clever, to move houses about in that fashion." Such was her conclusion; and Mrs. Graham also thought that Maître Louis Renaud must be a wonderful carpenter, and that with his help, and that of a few such men, Edward Graham could surely build Mr. Bertram's turret; so she was not much disheartened after all when her nephew gave her his account of his interview with Monsieur Gentil; and she rather startled him by remarking in her sudden way:

"I think you can do without him, Ned."

"Do without a builder, auntie!"

"Be your own builder, I say."

And thereupon Mrs. Graham proceeded to give him her, or rather Sarah's view of the subject, only cursorily mentioning that authority in such words as, "Nurse says that Mr. Bertram is a rich man; and servants know a good deal about these things. She is a sharp, shrewd woman, is that nurse, and gave me a most extraordinary account of the brown house. Would you believe it, Ned, it was taken to pieces and put up again by a Saint Aubin carpenter? Now such a man would be invaluable to you, I think."

"How so, auntie?"

He spoke calmly, as if he would not understand his aunt's meaning; and indeed he would not until she used speech as plain as speech could be. This discourse took place between them on the little terrace at the end of Mrs. Scot's garden, whence the view was so fine. To all appearance that view engrossed Edward Graham.

"Ned," said his aunt, "turn round, please—yes, so—put your back to that wall, and instead

of looking at these roofs and houses, look at me."

He obeyed with a smile, and his aunt, who stood facing him, developed all her arguments. Mr. Graham heard her with seeming great attention, with arms folded across his breast, and eyes looking straight before him, and no longer diverted by the fair prospect below.

"And so," remarked Mrs. Graham, by way of conclusion (after talking for a quarter of an hour), "I say that Mr. Bertram will certainly stretch a point if you are not too cold about this matter."

"I suppose so," replied her nephew; but he spoke so absently that Mrs. Graham turned sharply round and looked behind her. She did not see much there, but what she saw was enough. Lily Scot sat in a green summer-house, with a little sister on either side, hearing them through their lessons. Her fair face, her downcast eyes, her graceful attitude, were very pleasant to look upon.

"Ah! to be sure. I had forgotten she hears them here every evening; and we are in the way," remarked Mrs. Graham, explanatorily. "And now, Ned, you heard all I said."

"Yes, auntie."

"And you will make the attempt and see about that man with the stones and the carpenter?"

"I will, auntie."

But he was still looking at Lily, and as he looked, he thought: "Yes, this is the girl I should like to marry—sweet, modest, domestic, and gentle—but shall I ever have the chance?"

CHAPTER X.

EDWARD GRAHAM was a man of strong will; when he had, after due reflection, come to certain conclusions, he rarely changed his mind, yet he allowed his aunt to persuade him against his better judgment into seeing Maître Jacques Cœur and Maître Louis Renaud. He knew beforehand, or at least he said so, that the attempt would be a vain one, yet to please his aunt, or because of a secret, far-away hope which lurked within him, he consented to do as Mrs. Graham wished. Of course the thing would not succeed, but yet if it did !

As a foreigner he laboured under a disadvantage, but he had self-confidence enough in his own powers of overcoming it not to let that consideration deter him. In this mood Mr. Graham made his way to Saint Aubin sur dun.

Maître Jacques Cœur lived at the furthest extremity of the little green Norman village, in a low straggling house close to his own quarries. Mr. Graham found him seated on a stone bench outside, with the dappled light and shade of a pear-tree playing on his brown face and white cotton night-cap. He wore a blue blouse, faded in many a washing; his wiry, wrinkled hands told of exposure and hard work; he smoked his pipe in slow, leisurely puffs, like one who has earned his rest, and all the while he looked at a little chubby grand-daughter of his playing on the brink of a pool where some white ducks were swimming.

"That man is one of the richest in the place, and yet dresses like the poorest peasant in the village," thought Edward Graham, taking in Maître Jacques and all his surroundings at a glance; "he will be hard to deal with."

Never was anticipation more correct or more completely fulfilled than this.

"I believe you are Maître Jacques Cœur?" said Mr. Graham, looking down at the brown face under its white headgear.

The owner of both face and night-cap took

out his pipe and answered with grave facetiousness,

"People say so, at least."

"You deal in stone?" remarked Edward Graham, speaking point-blank.

Maître Jacques resumed his pipe, and nodded by way of reply. Your true Norman becomes wonderfully cautious and circumspect when he gets a scent of business. But Mr. Graham was essentially a direct man; moreover, he had little time to spare, and was determined to lose none, so he continued in the same strain of unequivocal frankness:

"I want good stone, and have been directed to you as likely to let me have it on reasonable terms."

Maître Jacques emitted a puff of blue smoke, and said not one word. Mr. Graham began to feel provoked.

"Perhaps I have been misdirected, and that you do not sell stone."

Maître Jacques took out his pipe, and said leisurely,

"Who else sells it, then?"

Mr. Graham's dark brows knit.

"This is not business," he replied, "and I

have no time to spare. Maître Jacques, do you sell stone, or do you not?"

He knit his eyebrows, as we said, but Maître Jacques raised his, as much as to say, "Verily, this is an impatient young man."

"How much stone do you want?" he condescended to inquire.

"How do you sell it?" was the retort.

"Now just listen," said Maître Jacques, taking out his pipe, laying it on his knee, and looking at his little granddaughter, who was chasing the ducks. "I have all the stone in Saint Aubin, and you ask me how I sell it. Where is the use, since you must buy from me?"

"I suppose there are boats on the sea that can bring stone to the port of Saint Aubin?" sharply retorted Mr. Graham.

"Where is the use?" mildly argued Maître Jacques. "You will find that I sell the stone as cheap as it is needful for no one to bring it to Saint Aubin."

"I understand; but be so kind as to tell me at what rate you sell the cubic metre."

"You will not find it dear," placidly answered Maître Jacques, yawning slightly.

"Very likely; but I wish to know what I spend."

"Do you want stone?" inquired Maître Jacques, looking logical. "Yes," he answered, for Mr. Graham, "you do. Well then, I say, you must buy it from me, for no one else has any stone to sell in Saint Aubin."

"I ask you at what rate you sell it," said Mr. Graham, ignoring the line of argument with cool contempt—"how much you charge for the cubic metre just as it comes from the quarry?"

"Where am I to send it to?" asked Maître Jacques, after a long pause, which Mr. Graham had thought to be devoted to mental calculation. He fairly lost patience, and turned his back on the owner of the quarries of Saint Aubin.

"Where is the use?" calmly ejaculated Maître Jacques, resuming his pipe; "he must come back, you know—no one else has any stone to sell."

But Maître Jacques was mistaken. Mr. Graham's attempt had been made to please his aunt; he had got rid of it, and felt as if the burden of some incubus had been removed from his shoulders. "There is no building without

stone," he argued to himself; "and as there is no getting stone out of that impracticable Norman, the turret is an impossibility. Aunt must see that."

In his vexation with Maître Jacques, Mr. Graham, instead of turning back, had walked on, not caring whither he went. He soon found himself on the very brink of the quarries which gave their owner such power in the matter of stone. There they lay beneath him white precipices, deep and wide, crowned with soft verdure, and opening a noble prospect of the distant sea, now getting very deep and blue in the waning afternoon. A sound of voices made Mr. Graham look round—his aunt was coming towards him, with Lily Bertram skipping by her side. She was not slip-shod, as usual, and was necessarily much lighter-footed.

"Well," breathlessly cried Mrs. Graham, rushing into the subject uppermost in her mind, "is not that beautiful stone, Ned?"

"*My* house was built of that stone," said Lily, putting in her word; "wasn't it, Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Graham assented with civil coldness, and a big moth having passed by them, Lily, with a

cry of eager joy, rushed after it in hot pursuit.

"Don't hurt it, my dear," expostulated Mrs. Graham.

"Oh! no," answered Lily, still running.

"Well, you have seen Maître Jack What's-his-name," eagerly remarked Mrs. Graham, fastening her bright blue eyes full on her nephew's face.

"Yes, aunt, I have, and there is no dealing with the man. He cannot be made to name his terms. I understand why Mr. Bertram himself could not do it."

Mrs. Graham's expressive face fell. She had made Maître Jacques' quarries the goal of her afternoon walk, under Lily's guidance, for the express purpose of looking at the stone out of which the turret was to be built. It seemed as if by this personal inspection she could help Edward Graham in some fashion. She now, after hearing a full account of his interview with Maître Jacques, tried to argue him out of the impression he had received. "He must have been mistaken," reasoned Mrs. Graham; "the man must wish to sell."

"True," replied her nephew; "but on his own terms, and in a way which, for a foreigner,

at least, made dealings with him impracticable. —This is a slow place and a slow race, auntie," said Edward Graham, by way of conclusion; "people here spend hours in driving bargains, and days in the splitting of straws. Granted that I can get the better of this man's insolence, am I to have as much trouble with every other Norman that I deal with? Why, then I would rather build the Tower of Babel than Mr. Bertram's turret."

Mrs. Graham looked utterly disconcerted, and in a most doleful tone said that she supposed so. Her nephew was sorry for her disappointment, but he thought he had convinced her that further efforts were waste of time. Mrs. Graham soon showed him his mistake. The good lady, who had a trick of picking up every stray waif that came in her way, had just pounced upon a bit of twine lying on the road, and was tying it up neatly, and with evident satisfaction, preparatory to putting it in her pocket, when Lily came back, without the moth, but, very unexpectedly, with Mr. Cowper, easy, pleasant, lounging, and good-humoured as ever.

Now it had happened, much to Edward Gra-

ham's satisfaction, but also to his surprise, that since his arrival in Saint Aubin he and Mr. Cowper had not once met. Mr. Cowper, who had professed such tender admiration for the fair Lily Scot—who had brought her her birds, who was Mr. Lennard's guest—had managed to keep clear of her mother's house.

"Why, Mr. Cowper," cried Mrs. Graham, on seeing him, "where have you been? This is my first sight of you, and I have been here—" She paused in doubt.

"Four days," suggested Lily promptly. "And even Ned has not seen you."

"My friend Ned Graham and I have not the same haunts," replied Mr. Cowper. "I, in true British fashion, frequent the reading-room, and try to carry my Lares with me; whereas, he is up to the ears in Saint Aubin architecture."

"Oh! but you know all about the people!" cried Mrs. Graham, with sudden ardour, "and you can render me such a service. Do come with me, Mr. Cowper, and let us have a talk with an old Norman who owns all this stone, and won't sell it, nor say how much it costs. Ned could make nothing of him. It is not two minutes hence."

Mr. Cowper looked slightly surprised, but too courteous to utter a nay, howsoever politely worded, to a lady's request, he walked away with Mrs. Graham, whose nephew, unsuspicious of so indiscreet an attempt at interference on her part, and glad to be relieved from the presence of his *bête-noire*, had allowed himself to be lured by Miss Bertram out of the path into a field hard by. She wanted to show him an ant-hill, and he wanted not to look at Richard Cowper. Lily described the ant-hill to him not only as the most wonderful in all Saint Aubin sur dun, but as the most remarkable ant-hill that had ever been. No such ants as these, so clever, so active, so industrious, according to Lily, had ever existed. Mr. Graham listened to her without heeding her much, then suddenly raising his downcast eyes, he saw before him the green landscape and precipitous quarries with the far-away sea, all bathed in golden sunset, but no token of either his aunt or Mr. Cowper. Lily at once volunteered information. Her keen young ears had heard Mrs. Graham's request and Mr. Cowper's assenting reply, and she now said composedly:

"Oh! Mrs. Graham and Mr. Cowper have

gone to see Maître Jacques Cœur about the price of stone; because," kindly added Lily, unconscious of harm, "you could make nothing of Maître Jacques."

Edward Graham turned red and bit his lips, but said nothing, and waited for his aunt's return. It was lucky, however, that when Mrs. Graham came back, triumphant, at the end of ten minutes, which seemed sixty to her nephew's impatience—it was lucky, we say, that Mr. Cowper was not with her. He had gone on to Saint Aubin sur dun, being, said Mrs. Graham, rather pressed for time.

"But perhaps we can overtake him," cried Lily. "I wished to talk to Mr. Cowper—you should not have let him go, Marraine."

She looked vexed, and was so. To have lost the moth had been a disappointment, but to have found Mr. Cowper had been a sort of compensation; and now that he was gone, Lily felt aggrieved.

"On my word," said Mrs. Graham, more amused than offended, "I should not have let him go, should not I? Well, well, Miss Lily——"

"Don't!" interrupted Lily, throwing her

arms round the old lady's neck. "I knew I was wrong, but I *do* like Mr. Cowper; and he always runs away from me."

If Mr. Graham had not been full of his grievance, he could not have helped thinking that for once he and Mr. Cowper were of one mind.

"Never mind if he does," philanthropically replied Mrs. Graham; "don't you pursue him, that's all. Depend upon it, my dear, it is not for nothing that Apollo runs after Daphne, and not Daphne after Apollo. Well, Ned, thanks to Mr. Cowper I know all about it—you can have stone, beautiful stone," said Mrs. Graham, emphatically,—"for—dear me, I have forgotten; but it was so cheap, said Mr. Cowper—only a few francs the cubic metre, Ned."

She spoke triumphantly, and was surprised at her nephew's rigid face and gloomy brow.

"Stone!" cried Lily, all alive with curiosity —"do you want the stone for the turret, Mr. Graham?"

"I want no stone, Miss Bertram," he answered, coldly; "but I like to know the value of these things; and I am much obliged to my aunt and Mr. Cowper."

Lily parted the hair back from her forehead

and looked at him rather earnestly, then remained thoughtful for two minutes, during which the three walked silently on towards the town; then, seeing another moth, she ran away with the eager cry,

"I'll have that one!"

"Is she not to know?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"There is nothing to hide, aunt."

"Perhaps the stone is too dear, after all," ejaculated Mrs. Graham, looking uneasy. "I suppose it would take many a cubic metre—what barbarous words these Normans have! Still, I think you can manage it, Ned, if you like."

"I have nothing to manage, aunt. I will have nothing to do with Mr. Bertram's turret, or with these people, that is all."

Mrs. Graham, who had just picked out a remarkable-looking pebble from a heap by the road-side, let it drop and roll away in her surprise.

"Ned," she said, mildly, "what ails you?"

"Nothing, auntie, save that it cannot be. On my word, it cannot."

He spoke gently and firmly—so firmly that blank dismay appeared on his aunt's face, but "I am very sorry" was all she said.

"I've got him!" cried Lily, running back to them in great haste.

"Don't hurt him, my dear," said Mrs. Graham, absently.

"Oh! now that I have seen him he may go."

Lily kindly opened her fingers, and the moth fluttered off, and Mrs. Graham picked up the pebble and put it in her pocket, and Edward Graham walked on by her side and kept repeating to himself, "I wonder how much it was the cubic metre," and making internal calculations.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS vexation at the unwarranted interference of his aunt in thus introducing the man whom he disliked into his private concerns, had made Mr. Graham say more than he really felt. He found this out when he cooled down, and was once more alone, eating his solitary dinner in the City of Jerusalem. What though it was Mr. Cowper who had made Maître Jacques Cœur speak, information was none the worse for passing through him. A few francs the cubic metre showed that stone was cheap in Saint Aubin. In justice to himself—in justice to his aunt, who had set her heart on this matter—should he not ascertain the price of timber, and see Maître Louis Renaud, the carpenter, at once, and have done with that matter before the next morning? Of course it would all end in nothing,

and he could settle down once more to his quiet study of Saint Aubin architecture, with no distracting thoughts of Mr. Bertram's turret. In short, Mr. Graham would not give up hope without first exhausting all her lures.

Maître Louis Renaud lived in a sort of suburb, half town, half country, which straggled along the sea-shore. He had a shop there, and behind it a large yard full of timber, where Mr. Graham found him, with a lantern in his hand, searching and groping in the dust and shavings for some tool that had gone astray. In answer to Edward Graham's inquiries, a boy in the shop had directed him to the yard, unceremoniously informing him that "he would find the patron there," but not seeming to care to go with him.

The patron, or master, was, or seemed to be by his language, in a perfect frenzy of wrath. Oaths thick as hailstones, ominous of import as lightning, and growled forth in a voice of thunder, fell from his lips with a rapidity that startled even Mr. Graham, cool though he usually was. The threats which Maître Louis poured on the unknown "miserable" who had laid his tool astray, were enough, if they could

have been fulfilled, to make the hair of the most phlegmatic stand on end with horror. "To tear his nails off," was the ferocious wish which the patron repeated often enough, to show that such would have been his favourite mode of punishment, could he have inflicted it; and all the time he flitted about the yard with his lantern, unconscious of the vicinity of a stranger.

"I will tear your nails off when I get you!" said Maître Louis Renaud savagely. "I will tear them off one by one—I will——" Here the carpenter, suddenly turning round, found himself face to face with Edward Graham. A man of business is born such, as well as a poet. In a moment Maître Louis Renaud knew, not merely that Edward Graham had come on business, but also on what particular business he had come. He raised his lantern; the light flashed across his visitor's face and figure, and showed his own thin visage and wiry frame; then, dropping wrathful objurgations, angry search for his tool, and threats of vengeance, with amazing suddenness, Maître Louis said in a smooth tone, from which all the growling had vanished:

"Monsieur wants a talk with me—with great

pleasure. I moved the brown house, as Monsieur knows, and Monsieur Bertram and I have had many a conversation about his house and the turret. Will Monsieur come this way?"

He crossed the yard, and led his visitor to a little parlour at the back of his shop, where a light was burning. He handed Edward Graham a chair, took one himself, took out his pocket-book and pencil, and sat with his little cunning grey eyes winking expectantly up in Edward Graham's face.

Maître Jacques had been provokingly reticent and slow, but the young architect began to suspect that Maître Louis might be irritatingly sharp and eager.

"I only want to trouble you with one or two questions," he replied guardedly.

"You want to know about the timber and carpentering for Monsieur Bertram's turret," said Maitre Louis point-blank. "Well, I knew you would be coming this evening, so I got all the calculations ready."

"And pray how could you know this?" asked Edward Graham, sharply.

Maître Louis smiled mysteriously. "It was useless to explain to Monsieur," he said; "but

as Monsieur saw, he did know it." But Monsieur, unreasonable man, had been vexed because Maître Jacques would give him no information; and he was now annoyed because Maître Louis was too ready with his. The man's manner and appearance also displeased him exceedingly. His little, spiteful, though decidedly clever face, gave a sort of reality to the vicious wishes and wicked swearing which Edward Graham had overheard in the yard; then the suddenness of the change in his tone and bearing from fury to civility was ominous; people who calm down on such short notice can fire up too on warning as brief. Was it wise, was it prudent in him, Edward Graham, a foreigner, ignorant of the ways of the country, to have dealings with such a man as this? In a moment the young man answered his own question—it was not; and he would not do it.

Whilst these thoughts passed through him, Maître Louis, not seeming to read the mistrust expressed in the grave face, and bent brows of his visitor, thrust a dirty paper, covered with figures, before him, and said eagerly,

"Monsieur will see how reasonable it is. My timber does not come from Norway. I buy it

from Baron Mérigny, a worthy gentleman, who lives ten leagues off, and who would not cheat a baby. I season it myself, and I have here the very beams and boards that will do for Monsieur Bertram's turret. If Monsieur will come into the yard and look at them, he will see that they are the very thing."

And before Edward Graham could object, he had started up, seized the light, opened the door, and he stood on the threshold, all eagerness and ardour to display his timber.

"You are very kind," said Mr. Graham, without moving. "I only want to know about the moving of the brown house. I am an architect, and the subject is interesting to me."

Maître Louis Renaud showed no disappointment, no surprise, but he just moved the candle he held, so that its light fell on Mr. Graham's face; then he came back to his place, sat down, and remained silent for a few seconds, like a chess-player startled by some unexpected move of his adversary.

"I am at Monsieur's service," he at length said, civilly. "I saw Monsieur drawing the brown house, and if Monsieur will tell me when he goes there again, I will be there too and explain it all to Monsieur on the spot."

This was said very simply, yet Mr. Graham felt trapped. He submitted, however, with a good grace, and saying that he would be at the brown house the next morning, he rose, apologising for his intrusion, and prepared to leave. Edward Graham's hand was on the door, when Maître Louis laid his forefinger on the arm of his visitor, and, looking up into his face, said, with a shrewd wink,

"Timber and work are dear here, but I make concessions to good customers; and Monsieur being an architect, I would make concessions to him."

"You are very good," replied Edward Graham.

"You will not tell Monsieur Bertram."

"I have nothing to say to him."

"The concessions would be enormous," whispered Maître Louis; "and the work superb; and I would take care that Maître Jacques did not overcharge Monsieur."

Edward Graham fumbled at the lock.

"And excuse me," resumed the carpenter, still detaining him, "you could not come to terms with Monsieur Gentil, I know; and Maître Jacques Cœur, with whom I saw you talking

awhile ago"—("I do believe the man has been watching me," thought Edward Graham,)—"would give you trouble, leave you a whole month without stone—you do not know the man—no, it would never answer to do that yourself; but there is a builder, a good, meek, honest man, who would not cheat a baby—a little builder in a small way, and in the next town, who could work on your plan, of course, do as you bid him, that and no more, and be as reasonable for you as for one of us, not charge you a sou more, though you are a foreigner; and if you like I will tell you more about him to-morrow at the brown house."

"Good evening, Maître Louis," impatiently answered Edward Graham, walking out.

"You could see him this very evening if you liked," continued Maître Louis. "I know that he is in Saint Aubin."

"Good evening, Maître Louis."

And Edward Graham walked away, and would hear no more; but more of another kind, nevertheless, he was destined to hear. As he turned round the corner of the wooden palings which fenced in the carpenter's timber-yard, he heard Maître Louis again searching for his miss-

ing tool, and again swearing at the delinquent, and this time deeds as well as words seemed to accompany his objurgations, for a loud, sharp boyish cry, speedily hushed, was heard in the quiet night.

"There is Maître Louis beating his 'prentice again," muttered a woman who was passing by.

The cry was not repeated, and Mr. Graham made his way to Mrs. Scot's house. He was not expected, but he had received a general invitation, and thought it only civil to avail himself of it. Four days of his fifteen were now gone by, and there was no reason why he should deny himself the pleasure of spending an evening in a pretty girl's company. Mr. Graham was so far candid with himself that he knew what drew him to the house of Mrs. Scot. The lady herself he barely tolerated, his aunt he could have in England, little Miss Bertram was a nuisance, and the two youthful Misses Scot were nonentities, but Lily Scot was fair to see and delightful to listen to, though she said very little; and charming to sit near when one had the chance. He would make the best of these days he had to stay; and if that were not wisdom, what was?

And so Mr. Graham went to Mrs. Scot's house, and there spent as pleasant an evening as he had expected. Mrs. Scot indeed was not very well, and lay on her sofa, and thence prosed away, unmercifully bestowing on her visitor all the Saint Aubin gossip.

"Of course you know the news, Mr. Graham," she said, barely giving him time to sit down, and drawing away his reluctant look from the little round table where the clear light of the lamp shone on the fair face of her daughter; "do give us your candid opinion—now do. I am sure you are unprejudiced, and will decide quite fairly."

"I beg your pardon, but I really do not know on what I am to decide, Mrs. Scot."

"Well, but it took place in the reading-room on the quay, you know," argued Mrs. Scot, as if this line of logic were irrefutable.

But Mr. Graham knew nothing of the reading-rooms, had not even entered them since his arrival. Mrs. Scot was lost in amazement. She was so surprised that she almost forgot to tell him the history of the reading-room transaction, on which she wished him to pass judgment; and it is just possible that her astonish-

ment at the extraordinary fact that Mr. Graham had actually been four days in Saint Aubin and not entered the reading-rooms, may have helped to take away from the perspicuity of her narrative.

"You see," she said, suddenly rushing into the middle of the subject, and like a true partisan waving her standard and showing her colours at once, "I say that Mr. Cowper was really not to blame. Of course the *Times* supplement is very nice reading, but that is just why Mrs. Robin wanted it. As to Mr. Foster's making a fuss, why, he is fussy, you know, Mr. Graham. You must have noticed it. What! you don't know Mr. Foster? Dear me, I thought every one knew him. As to Mr. Cowper, it is all so like his good nature, that I wonder any one can blame him, I really do; and it is too bad of Mrs. Greenacre to throw the blame on him just because she cannot bear Mrs. Robin; and he wanted to please her. Now, Mr. Graham, what is your opinion of it all?"

The name of Mr. Cowper was sufficient to darken Mr. Graham's brow, flush his cheek, and even alter the tones of his voice, as he coldly pleaded ignorance as to who was right and who was wrong.

"Oh! but it all lies in a nutshell," cried Mrs. Scot, waxing warm, and giving a little sniff of annoyance at Mr. Graham's dulness; "and though I may not tell a story well, Mrs. Randolph declares no one tells it more clearly than I do. My sister-in-law never *would* understand my letters, but when people will not understand why, they will not," triumphantly added Mrs. Scot. "As to Mrs. Robin, poor soul, if she did wish to read the *Times* supplement, why should she not get it?"

"Because she is no subscriber, to be sure," roundly remarked Mrs. Graham, looking up from the stocking she was knitting.

"But where would have been Mr. Cowper's good-nature, if she had been a subscriber?" cried Mrs. Scot, again triumphant—"you can't get out of that, Mrs. Graham."

Having gored her opponent with the horns of this dilemma, Mrs. Scot luckily digressed about Mrs. Robin. How did Mr. Graham like her? Not know her! Why, she lived in the house next to the reading-rooms—that large white house, with a hairdresser's shop—very odd for a superior person like Mrs. Robin to live above a hairdresser's shop, and then that

vicinity had brought on the ill-will between her and Mrs. Greenacre, the owner of the reading-rooms; but that, too, was Mrs. Robin's fault. She would treat Mrs. Greenacre as if she were a lady, "And we all told her how it would end," triumphantly declared Mrs. Scot. "There is a class of persons, Mr. Graham, whom one can—not, whom one positively can—not raise above their position, or allow, so to speak, to get beyond the parlour. Let them into your drawing-room, and you are ruined. They misbehave themselves without even knowing it."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose with one of her knitting-needles, and looked puzzled.

"Well, I suppose so," she said, with perfect *naïveté*. "I daresay now, Mrs. Scot, that if you and I were to get into a duchess's drawing-room, we should misbehave ourselves without knowing it."

"My dear Mrs. Graham, how ridiculous!" cried Mrs. Scot, rising up in indignant amazement.

"Well, it is ridiculous to fancy ourselves there at all," good-humouredly confessed Mrs. Graham—"at least, a duchess would think so. Yet do you know, Mrs. Scot, I don't think

there is so much difference between people. I did know a Countess—a real Earl's wife and baronet's daughter; I mention no names—and she was as little a vulgar, rolly-polly sort of a woman as you ever saw."

"But, my dear Mrs. Graham," laughed, or rather sniffed, Mrs. Scot, "what has that to do with Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Greenacre? I can't see the analogy, I assure you."

"Can't you?" said Mrs. Graham, again rubbing her nose with the knitting-needle.

"No, I really can not," replied Mrs. Scot, sniffing again; and she would have said more, but luckily tea and little Miss Bertram both came in, and Mr. Cowper, the reading-rooms, and Mrs. Robin, and Mrs. Greenacre, were put by, and resumed no more.

The rest of the evening was spent after a fashion more congenial to Edward Graham, for Mrs. Scot dozed when she had taken her tea, and the young man, putting by unwelcome thoughts, and eschewing unpleasant themes, made himself so agreeable that Lily Scot's dark eyes beamed softly, and Lily Bertram, leaning on the little round table with her two elbows resting upon it, and her full young face

half buried in her hands, looked and listened, and for once quite forgot to talk, unless towards the close of the evening, when she whispered rather too audibly in Miss Scot's ear, "How clever he is!" to which, blushing a little, Lily answered with a soft "Hush, darling!"

Mrs. Graham was delighted to see her nephew in such good spirits, and as she never lost sight of her own ideas, she rapidly concluded that she had misunderstood him, and that, after all, matters were secretly tending towards the goal of her wishes. She was so full of this that, when he took his leave and went away, she followed him out. "In order to see what sort of a night it was," she averred, but in reality in order to whisper in his ear as he stood on the threshold of Mrs. Scot's dwelling, with the dark street before him,

"I see that something new has turned up, Ned—what is it?"

"Nothing, aunt, save that I shall never be Mr. Bertram's man."

He spoke almost sharply. The question jarred upon him. It reminded him unpleasantly that he must leave Saint Aubin no better off in fame or money than he had entered it.

"Well, I am sorry," emphatically replied his aunt, still speaking low, though they were alone, Sarah having left them to light the lantern which had suddenly gone out; "for do you know I think Mr. Cowper has an eye to Lily after all. You heard her mother talking about him."

Here Sarah came back, and Mr. Graham hurried off, saying,

"Good night, auntie. Never mind me, my good girl, I want no light—no, no, I will have none—I know the road."

And indeed he was half-way down the street as he spoke.

"What a lively gentleman!" said Sarah, admiringly.

"Yes, he has a good pair of legs," answered his aunt, proudly.

"So *he* wants her, does he?" bitterly thought Edward Graham as he went on in the darkness; "and suppose he does, what is it to me?—and how can I help it?"

It was past ten when Mr. Graham reached the Cité de Jérusalem, and past ten was late for Saint Aubin. Nevertheless, the girl who lit his candle and handed him his key, informed

him that Monsieur—and she nodded towards a plain middle-aged man sitting on a chair in the *salle*, with his stick between his knees—had been waiting for him this hour. The man rose, and looking at Edward Graham with a very straightforward look, that matched with his guileless, ruddy face, apologized for his intrusion, but he must leave Saint Aubin early the next morning, and so he had taken the liberty of waiting on Monsieur this evening. Edward Graham took in the whole man at a glance—hard work, exposure to wind and weather, and withal the substantial, independent air of a man who has money, were written in his aspect. "He is a builder, and he is sent by Maître Louis," thought the young architect, but betraying neither his suspicion nor the annoyance it gave him, he asked his visitor to follow him upstairs, and showed him the way to his room. He put the candle on the high chimneypiece, where it flared away in the night air that came in through the open window, gave the stranger one of the Louis Quinze arm-chairs, took the other himself, and leaning back in his seat he waited quietly till his guest should declare his errand.

"I am the builder," he said bluntly.

"What builder?" perversely inquired Edward Graham.

"The builder whom Maître Louis Renaud mentioned to you two hours ago," the other answered, so simply that the young man felt rebuffed. "Perhaps he did not tell you my name," resumed the builder, his face brightening, as if he thus accounted to himself for his host's coldness—"Jean Merle—yes, my name is Jean Merle, and I live in Chaugy, ten leagues off. I am going home to-morrow, so I came this evening, and so if you like it we can talk about Monsieur Bertram's turret at once."

Edward Graham no longer hoped to prevent all Saint Aubin from connecting him with Mr. Bertram's turret, so he replied composedly that he would hear what Monsieur Merle had to say.

"Well, Monsieur," began Monsieur Merle, clearing his throat, "I shall begin about myself. I have been a working-man—my hands" and he stretched forth two large, brown, coarse hands, and laughed complacently as he displayed them—"my hands can tell you as much. I am not ashamed of it; I can barely read or

write—I am sorry for that; but I was not taught, and was put to work when I was ten years old, so there was no time for learning. Well, I married, and had a child, then another, and another, and so I bestirred myself, and did a little job for some one, then a little job for some one else, and so I became a builder, and now I know building thoroughly—yes, no man better. I can say that for myself—I can build."

Monsieur Jean Merle slapped his knee with hearty emphasis as he thus asserted that he could build, and looked delighted with his own eloquence.

"But I have never built anything save houses," he resumed. "You must not imagine, Monsieur, that I am going to set myself up for what I am not. No; but if you tell me how to do a thing, I can do it as well and as cheap as anyone—yes, as well as any man living," asserted Monsieur Merle, kindling a little. "I know how to build, Monsieur, from cellar to garret. I know how to build, and how to buy too. I get stone cheap, good stone, and timber, good timber, and carpenters and masons must work well, or they will not do for me; and I know where to put my hand on carvers

and sculptors when I want them, but I have never wanted them yet; and none attempt to impose upon me, because I have been a workman, and give fair wages, and will have good work, because work must be good, and a bargain is a bargain, and the man who does not stick to a bargain," said Monsieur Jean Merle, kindling again, "is no better than dirt, Monsieur."

The man was very much in earnest. The night air, that came in through the open window, blew back the thin brown hair from his forehead; but Monsieur Jean Merle did not mind it. The flickering light of the candle fell on his full, harmless face, but Monsieur Jean Merle cared nought for that; he had nothing to hide, he was full of his subject, and did not even seem to see Edward Graham, though staring at him all the time.

"Pity he will not do," thought the young man, "he is so honest." "Well, Monsieur Merle," he said aloud, "what do you propose, or rather suggest, about this matter? I expect it to end in nothing; but you have taken the trouble to call—I am willing to hear you."

Monsieur Merle's face fell a little as he heard

him, but he rallied after a while, and expounded his ideas. These were few, simple, and clear as day. If Edward Graham would give him his designs and his plans, he, Monsieur Merle, would carry them out, build the turret from the cellar to the garret, undertake every dealing with sellers of stone and of timber, with carpenters, smiths, glaziers, plumbers, carvers, and workmen of every description, and take on himself the responsibility of the success or failure of the whole affair.

"And you will find the capital for all this?" said Edward Graham.

"And I will find the capital for all this, of course," replied Monsieur Jean Merle triumphantly; "the workmen I shall pay in ready money, of course, but the others will take bills. My bills, Monsieur, are as good as gold for twenty leagues round Saint Aubin."

Edward Graham's dark eyes lit for the first time.

"How charmingly everything would go on if Mr. Bertram would or could only spend enough upon that turret of his!" thought he. Then his look fell as suddenly as it had kindled —for was not that the root of the difficulty, the

one obstacle which there was no getting over? Still the temptation was there, and the young man so far yielded to it as to expound a few of his ideas to the builder. He found that this plain, rough man, who lived ten leagues off, had already bestowed some attention on this hobby of Mr. Bertram's, and though he honestly confessed that Monsieur Bertram had never said a word to him on the subject, it was evident that he too had been hankering after that Fata Morgana of a turret, and not been without secret hopes of encompassing it some day. The result of these ambitious aspirations was that he knew more of the subject than Edward Graham, and could enlighten him in some matters of importance.

"A plain turret could easily be done for fifteen or sixteen thousand francs," said he; "and one such as you mean might cost fifty thousand—perhaps more and perhaps less. Do not shake your head at the money, Monsieur. I know more than you do about all this. The Paris architect said it would cost two hundred thousand francs. Of course the turret was to be splendid; and Monsieur Duhamel, who will build, though all he builds falls to pieces,

wanted thirty thousand for a turret that would not have cost him half the money. So Monsieur Bertram, not knowing what to think, offers you twenty; but he has more than that to spend. He is rich, his daughter is rich, and Monsieur Lennard, her guardian, who wanted his nephew to have the job, has told all Saint Aubin that his ward could throw away seventy thousand francs if she chose; so do not think the money the thing, Monsieur—the thing," added Jean Merle, striking the table with his fist, "is to have good stone, good timber, and good work, and I will see to that. I can get Jacques Cœur's stone for six francs the cubic metre. It might cost you two hundred by the time it were fit to use. It will not cost me one! I can get good timber cheap, Monsieur, and I can deal with a workman who is a genius, and who will do all your fine carving cheap and well. And if you will give me some idea of the sort of carving you want, I will have a talk with him by next Monday, and I can tell you within a few hundred francs how much the turret will cost."

There was a curious sort of eloquence about this rough man—the eloquence of simple truth and honesty, and it told upon his listener, who,

though young, had a keen insight into human nature. He listened to him with grave, attentive eyes, and in perfect silence, till the builder ceased, and the room was once more silent.

"I am only deluding myself," thought Edward Graham; but he took up a pencil and a sheet of paper, and before five minutes were over, the two men were deep in the matter, and it was near midnight when they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE Miss Bertram was of a generous nature. When she had a good thing she liked to share it with her friends; and Sister Martha being one of the best things she possessed, she had lost no time in dividing her with her adopted godmother, Mrs. Graham.

Love of the poor was Mrs. Graham's weakness. Her charity was large and tender. She fell in love with Sister Martha at once. She fell in love with the old men and the old women; she gave them snuff without stint; she bought them woollen jackets, petticoats, and stockings; and, to crown all, she promised them a treat, to which Lily Bertram, Lily Scot, and her sisters were invited.

The thought of this treat, we are sorry to say, so filled up Mrs. Graham's mind that for

the time being it eclipsed all else. Her nephew had told her that he had seen a builder who seemed a very honest man, and that, on his dropping a hint to that effect, Mr. Bertram had graciously agreed "to have another talk with Mr. Graham on the subject of the turret." Mrs. Graham, who was as sanguine and as hopeful as a girl of fifteen, considered the matter all but settled, and gave herself up to her treat and to her old men and her old women *con amore.*

This treat required certain dainty viands, in the purchase of which Mrs. Graham was assisted by Lily Scot, and favoured with the society of Miss Bertram.

"Oh! do let me go too, and look on whilst you buy!" that young lady had pleaded so pathetically that a heart much harder than was Mrs. Graham's could not have resisted the appeal. So the three went off to the Basseville, Sarah following with a huge basket; and when they came back, the basket was not merely full, but Mrs. Graham was laden with parcels in white paper, which she would trust to none. Lily Scot walked by her side, carrying the daintiest little basket in the world, but which, though dainty, was thoroughly crammed;

and Lily Bertram panted in the rear, bearing a large melon—she had asked it as a favour—and talking to Sarah all the way. Mrs. Graham was talking too, and her mind being at rest about the treat, so far, at least, as provisions went, reverted to her nephew and his prospects.

"We must make him come to the treat," she gaily said to Lily Scot. "If he settles in Saint Aubin, he must know the dear old people, must he not?"

Miss Scot brushed away a speck from her neat jacket, and asked with modest composure if Mr. Graham was going to settle in Saint Aubin.

"I am the greatest chatter-box there ever was!" cried Mrs. Graham, shaking her head at her infirmity. "Of course, I should not have said it; yet it is true. Ned and Mr. Bertram are all about that turret again, and Mr. Lennard is in it, and the end of it will be that Ned will fall in love with some Saint Aubin girl, and either stay here with her, or take her away with him. I wonder now which would be the better plan of the two—to stay and become the architect of the place, since that Monsieur D something is no good, or to go back to England, and fight

his way up there with the turret to back him?"

"Is the matter of the turret settled?" asked Miss Scot, with gentle surprise.

"Yes, but do not say I told you so. Ned, poor fellow, will like to tell you himself."

This was said pointedly, but Miss Scot brushed off another speck—the day was a dusty one—and walked on in dreamy silence by her godmother's side, till Mrs. Graham roused her by exclaiming at the top of her voice, "Oh, there he is!" They had gone by Mrs. Scot's door on their way to the Asile, and were passing Mr. Bertram's, when Edward Graham walked out into the sunlit street.

"Oh! Ned, my dear boy, I am so glad to catch you!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham. "Lily, my dear, will you and dear little Lily Bertram and Sarah take care of these things for me?" she added, surrendering her parcels with sudden indifference. "I just want to talk five minutes to my nephew." And without giving Mr. Graham time to do more than bow to the young ladies, she seized his arm, and marched off with him up the street, taking long strides, as was her wont, and forgetting the treat, and the old men and old women, in this revulsion of feeling.

"Oh! I'll go with them," cried Lily Bertram, eagerly, throwing her melon into Sarah's basket. "I have not seen Mr. Graham so long!"

And off she would have gone, if Miss Scot had not checked her with gentle seriousness.

"Well," said Mrs. Graham, almost excitedly, "is it settled at last? You said it was to be to-day."

"Yes, auntie, it is settled," said Mr. Graham, composedly.

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Graham, her lip quivering with a joy which, even in the bitterness of his own disappointment, filled Mr. Graham with regret for having deceived her, though for one moment only.

"My dear, kind aunt," he said gently, "I meant that it was all over. Mr. Bertram and I cannot come to terms, and I am going back to England to-morrow."

Mrs. Graham stood still, and looked up at her nephew with a very blank face.

"You don't mean it?" she said at last.

"Auntie, I do. Such a turret as I should like to build would cost two thousand pounds, or fifty thousand francs. Mr. Bertram has twenty thousand francs to spend; Mr. Lennard

would add twenty thousand more for his ward. Where are the missing ten thousand to come from?"

"And so you can't build the turret, and you can't marry Lily Scot," said Mrs. Graham, with a groan; "well, I am disappointed! But you can't go yet, Ned. I have promised to stay another fortnight."

"Auntie, I will come back to fetch you with pleasure, but I must go to-morrow. I received a letter on business this very morning, and you know I must throw away none of my chances."

Mrs. Graham knew that very well, so she raised no objection. She was so subdued and downcast that she could scarcely utter more than a melancholy "My poor Ned, I am so sorry!" with which, as if all further discourse were useless, she turned back to Mrs. Scot's house. They parted at the door. Mrs. Graham entered the dining-room in a most depressed mood. She chose that apartment, which was usually deserted at that hour, in order to be alone there, and brood over her vexation. But Miss Scot, who had seen her godmother enter the house, soon came with sweet solicitude to know what ailed her.

"I am afraid you are not well, Marraine," gently said Lily Scot, looking at Mrs. Graham, whose kindly face indeed wore a meaning of unusual gloom.

"My dear, I am disappointed," answered Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "Edward is going away to-morrow, and it spoils my treat."

Miss Scot, who had guessed as much, did not reply, but looked dreamily out of the dining-room window, by which she was standing. Of course he must go, of course that talk of the turret had all come to nothing; but what a pity it was; and so looking dreamily out the window at the flagged court and the green garden with its bright patches of colour, she sighed to herself, and felt a little disappointed—only a little. Not that she did not value Mr. Graham rightly, but because she had never allowed herself to hope that anything would come of his evident admiration, and of Mrs. Graham's broad hints.

"I am so provoked," said Mrs. Graham. "Why will he go?"

"Perhaps he must," suggested Lily.

"Why will he not stay and build that turret for Mr. Bertram?"

"And would not Mr. Graham do that?" asked Lily, slightly raising her fine dark eyebrows.

"Ned is very pig-headed," testily resumed Mrs. Graham. "I offered him money to go on with, a builder offered him unlimited credit—unlimited, my dear, and he would not come to terms with Mr. Bertram."

"Perhaps he could not," suggested Lily, earnestly; "perhaps Mr. Bertram cannot afford it. That turret would cost a great deal of money, Marraine, and Mr. Graham knows it."

"So he says! so he says!" impatiently exclaimed Mrs. Graham. "He saw all the people he tells me, and he had their figures; and he went to Mr. Bertram, and Mr. Bertram went to him, and he back again to Mr. Bertram, and they could not agree, which is all nonsense. Why should they not agree?"

Lily smiled, rather faintly, but still she smiled, for she could bear it, and Mrs. Graham, though pleased to see her so collected and easy, liked her none the better for her composure. She had constructed a romance of her own about Lily and her nephew, and she felt discomfited at its failure. It was evident to her now, not merely that Edward Graham could

not stay in Saint Aubin to build Mr. Bertram's turret, but that, so far as Lily was concerned, it mattered little whether he did stay or not. Miss Scot was not smitten. "I suppose it is all as it should be," ruefully thought Mrs. Graham, "but I should like Lily to have more heart."

Miss Scot did not suspect the hard construction which Mrs. Graham put upon her composure; she had seen Mr. Graham's admiration, and she had liked it; she had listened to Mrs. Graham's indiscreet hints, half with pleasure, and half with annoyance. For a little while she had allowed a faint fluttering hope that something pleasant would come out of all this to creep round her heart. Now hope had departed, and Lily Scot could look after her rather wistfully, perhaps, but she was not the girl to break her heart because that faithless bird of promise had opened her wings and fled for evermore. "It was sure to end so," was her sad, resigned thought, as she went about her household tasks, a little pensively, but not more sadly than it behoved a wise girl.

Mr. Graham felt it more keenly. He had been nearer fruition than Miss Scot; his, more-

over, was a double venture and a double wreck. Love had spurred ambition on, and ambition had quickened love. To build Mr. Bertram's turret, if possible, was not merely a thing to be done for Lily's sake—it was also to take rank at once with the foremost men, even as to wear Lily Scot in his bosom was to have won one of life's prizes, a prize as soothing to man's pride as the building of any turret that was ever reared by man's hands. To lose at once the rewards of ambition and love was very hard. Mr. Graham would not, if he could have helped it, have gone near Mrs. Scot's house again. Where was the use of looking at a girl who was not for him, whom some luckier man—Dick Cowper, perhaps—would be sure to win in the end? But civility, which has its martyrs as well as the heroic virtues, demanded that Edward Graham should bid Mrs. Scot adieu; and Mrs. Graham, who could be wilful and obstinate, wrote to insist that he should spend this last evening with her. Mrs. Scot expected it, she said, and Edward Graham, with a vexed and impatient smile, yielded against his better judgment.

There was a miserable pleasure, no doubt, in

passing an hour in Lily Scot's company, but such pleasures are generally dearly bought, and this evening was in every sense a failure. It was not merely painful, but dull. Mrs. Scot was sleepy, and thought Mr. Graham's presence something of a bore. He was going neither to build Mr. Bertram's turret, nor to marry Lily, and she would rather have had a nod than his society. Mr. Graham himself, though he made praiseworthy efforts to talk unconcernedly, was not enough of the man of the world to be quite successful. Miss Bertram gave him depressed looks, and grieved over his going away with Jane and Louisa (in suppressed tones, of course), who, though more callous, also looked slightly impressed. Mrs. Graham was neither as good-humoured nor as cheerful as she might have been, and Lily Scot alone looked almost the same as usual. A faint difference there might be, but though Mr. Graham was quick to detect the tender seriousness of her smile, his aunt did not perceive it, and again felt offended at her god-daughter's coldness.

Mr. Graham stayed an hour. When the clock struck ten, he rose.

"So soon!" cried Mrs. Scot, who had been nodding.

"I have to be up at four to-morrow morning," said Mr. Graham.

"At four!" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, looking scared—"oh, dear me!"

"Mr. Graham does not mind, mamma," remarked Lily Scot, smiling.

"I suppose some one wakens him," whispered Lily Bertram, rising on tiptoe to reach the ear of her friend, who gently said, "Hush!"

"Lily is always supposing something," said Jane to Louisa, with a giggle.

"Yes, I am very fond of supposing," candidly acknowledged Miss Bertram.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Graham, having taken leave of Mrs. Scot, came up to her eldest daughter, who rose, quiet, courteous, and, to all seeming, very calm indeed.

"I wish she would not be so cool!" indignantly thought Mrs. Graham, snapping her thread very short.

But Miss Scot was not so cool as she looked. She had seen Mr. Graham's suppressed regret, she understood its meaning, and it touched her more than she knew herself, till came this last moment of a parting which must, she felt, be final. Her fine feminine instinct told her that

he was a man incapable of trifling with her, and that, if he left her so, it was because he could not help himself. And yet it was a pity. Young Thomson could not compare with Mr. Graham; and to think of William would at all times have been a folly; but Mr. Graham, gentleman-like, honourable, and full of ardour for his profession, of an agreable presence and pleasant manners, was not the sort of lover whom Lily could hope to find again in a hurry, so when they stood face to face and shook hands, and said good-bye, and exchanged good wishes, there was an involuntary softness in her dark eyes which Mrs. Graham did not see, but which added a pang to her nephew's keen regret. His look lingered on that sweet fair face, which he was to see no more; his hand pressed that little gentle hand which he would have so liked to keep, with a sort of passion, then dropped it so abruptly that Lily blushed and stooped to pick up something that had not fallen; and as he hurried away, forgetting his aunt in his fear of betraying himself, he thought, "I might have had her—yes, I might have had her."

"Edward!" exclaimed his aunt, as he reached the door.

"Oh! auntie, I beg your pardon," he cried, coming back to her with a heightened colour.

"Never mind, my dear boy," she whispered, as he kissed her cheek. "Bless you, I am not angry—I know."

This last remark, being uttered in rather a loud key, did not tend to restore Mr. Graham's composure, but he made the best of his forgetfulness—he laughed, or tried to laugh, looked at Lily Scot again, and bidding them all once more good-bye, he was gone. A dead silence followed his departure. Lily Scot worked slowly, Mrs. Graham stitched vigorously, Mrs. Scot looked half asleep.

"Is Mr. Graham an early riser?" she asked at length.

"A very early riser," emphatically replied Mrs. Graham.

Another dead silence followed. Suddenly Lily Bertram looked up from the book of which she had been turning over the pages, and remarked, as if struck with the thought,

"Marraine, when will Mr. Graham come back to Saint Aubin?"

"Never," replied Mrs. Graham, with a sort of triumph in her look and tone. She was still angry with Lily for being so cool.

"Never!" echoed Miss Bertram, seeming dismayed. "Oh! I am so sorry."

"No, never," repeated a sorrowful voice in Lily Scot's heart—"never; he loved me, and I could have liked him, and his wife will be a very happy woman; but he is poor, and I am penniless, and he will never come back."

And Edward Graham, going down the street, had his own hard thoughts, for he met Dick Cowper, who stopped him, and, regardless of his short answers, would condole on his disappointment.

"Very vexatious," he said kindly; "but bless you, my dear fellow, I could have told you as much. Mr. Bertram has the money, but he will not spend: a delightful man, but slow, slow. Going to-morrow! So sorry! You have been to bid the Scots good-bye, I suppose? Are they alone?—no Pethericks, no Jekylls?—then I think I'll go in and spend an hour or two in the fair Lily's company."

And with a cordial shake of the hand, and friendly wishes for his journey, Mr. Cowper left Edward Graham, who, jealous and angry, walked back to the Cité de Jérusalem. "I am no better than the worn, defeated traveller," he thought

bitterly. "I should not wonder if that fellow will not build Mr. Bertram's turret after all, since he meddles with building—ay, and marry her, too, I daresay."

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS abrupt and unexpected ending to her plans exasperated Mrs. Graham as much as that kind, genial lady could be exasperated. Her little romance had broken off at the very beginning—there was not even a second volume to her novel; the hero and the heroine of her story had parted in so easy and common-place a fashion, that their meeting again was a matter of indifference to her. She had said that Edward Graham would never return to Saint Aubin, "But if he were to return to-morrow I should not care," thought Mrs. Graham, still indignant, "for he has spoiled my treat—that is what he has done."

Yes, melancholy to record, the treat was a very flat affair. Mrs. Graham was out of sorts, Miss Scot was thoughtful, and Lily Bertram

was wanting. A violent headache had consigned her to bed. It may be that the old men and the old women, who had so long done with love, did not suspect this catastrophe in Mrs. Graham's love-story. We doubt even if they missed Lily Bertram. They were in that shady valley where a little sun more or less does not matter much to those who live far away from the airy heights of youth and gladness. Sister Martha herself, though sorry for her little friend's indisposition, philosophically remarked, "Oh! but it will be nothing," and thought no more about it.

"I shall never give another treat," angrily thought Mrs. Graham; "or, at least, if I do, I shall not go to it. Ned has behaved abominably; and Lily Scot is simply heartless."

Poor Lily, this was the reward of her self-control.

We will not say that Miss Scot had spent a sleepless night, but it was late when she did sleep, and it was early when she awoke. The daily regularity of her morning tasks remained unaltered, but she carried through them a sorrowful thought, which might have softened the bitterness of her godmother's censure, could the

good lady have known it. The treat, moreover, gave her no pleasure, and though she did her best not to look dull, no one knew that the effort cost her something.

"He, too, liked me," thought Lily Scot, as, morning duties and treat being both over, she sat alone in the garden, seemingly intent on the little white collar she was stitching; "but where is the use of being nice-looking and being liked? I had better make up my mind at once that such things are not for me, and yet it is a pity, for I could have liked him, oh! so well, I am sure—better than anyone I have yet seen."

And as Miss Scot, though wise, was still young enough to have a day-dream now and then, she allowed her fancy to draw a retrospective picture of what might have been. First and foremost came a cottage in England. To live in England, and have a cottage there, near London, of course, was the ambition of this girl, born and reared in Saint Aubin. She pined for this unknown country with all the longings of an exile; and a cottage, built by Edward Graham, on one of his own designs, with just a little green bit of a garden, would have been

the summit of her ambition. How delightful to have had that little home to rule over and make nice for her husband; to watch for his coming at the garden-gate in the evening, to have him reading nice books whilst she stitched him perfect wristbands—in short, how charming to be married to a good, kind young man, and make him happy, and be made happy by him! Her mother and her sisters would have stayed in Saint Aubin, of course, but of course, too, they would have paid her long and frequent visits, till Jane and Louisa married near her (Edward Graham's best friends): and Mrs. Scot took up her final home with her eldest daughter. Fond as she was of her mother and sisters, Lily could not help wishing for a home of her own at first, so mentally consigning Mrs. Scot, Jane, and Louisa to the care of Sarah, she went off on her wedding trip to the English lakes, and was softly gliding down Windermere, with Edward Graham rowing, when a step on the gravel made her look up, and she saw Edward Graham himself standing before her. Self-possessed though she was, Lily could not help blushing a little.

"I am afraid I have startled you," he said,

hesitatingly; "but I am not gone, as you see, and I thought my aunt was here."

"She is in her room," replied Lily, with her pleasant smile—she had quite recovered her composure; "I shall go and tell her that you are here."

She rose, when, with outstretched hand and eager look and accent, Edward Graham exclaimed—

"No, pray do not!"

She stood irresolute before him, with her work in her hand; he gently took it from her, and put it away, and Lily Scot, looking in his face, knew his meaning. She turned pale and waited. She was neither troubled nor flurried, but she could not help being moved; the great drama of her life had come at last, and her fate lay before her.

"When I bade you good-bye last night, Miss Scot," said Edward Graham, betraying some emotion as he recalled that hard moment, "I did not hope to be so happy as to see you this morning; but I found Mr. Bertram at the Cité de Jérusalem; we came to an understanding, and my position is quite altered—I mean, that I have now a future before me which authorizes

me to say that which I should not have presumed to say yesterday. I do not ask you to take me upon trust, but indeed, Miss Scot, I think I am now a made man—I feel sure of success—and if you will give me a chance of you, I shall have nothing left to wish for. I do not ask you to pledge yourself—I cannot expect that," added Edward Graham, getting suddenly faint-hearted, for the sense of his presumption grew upon him as he looked at Miss Scot's sweet serious face—"but give me a chance of you—pray do!"

A pretty, triumphant smile flickered on Lily's lips as she heard him—a suppliant, and pleading thus with mingled eagerness and fear for her favour. Her dark eyes sparkled, even though they looked away shyly. In a moment Edward Graham's faint-heartedness vanished; he saw that he had prevailed, and wholly forgetting his protestations of humility, he asked eagerly to be taken upon trust after all. Lily had never meant to say him nay, and she did not do so; but if Edward Graham had not loved her before, he would have loved her then for the modest grace with which her consent was given. All that she felt Lily said or implied—

that, and no more. She was willing to become Mr. Graham's wife, and yet she let him understand that her preference was not such as to leave him nothing in her heart to win; and though, man-like, he loved her none the less because, whilst she gave much, she still withheld something, man-like, too, he jealously reproached her for her coldness.

"I know I have no right to expect more," he said, with a raised colour, "but still it is hard."

"But, Mr. Graham," replied Lily, smiling, "you forget that you were going away last night for good, and that I was never to see you again. Is it fair to be displeased because I did not give that which you had not asked for?"

"But what I longed for from the first moment I saw you!" he exclaimed warmly. "Do not deny that you saw it—do not, Lily!"

His voice softened as he uttered her name for the first time, and Lily, seeing him thus moved, and listening for the first time, too, to love spoken, felt prouder and happier than she cared to show. She liked his jealous reproaches —she liked them dearly; they were dreadfully unjust, but very pleasant in her ear, and the look she gave him was so full of benignity and

forgiveness that Mr. Graham asked himself with a sudden thrill of joy if this coy girl did not like him better than she cared to confess, after all. In the imprudence of his happiness, he might have told her so, if Miss Scot, who stood facing the path, to which his back was turned, had not exclaimed, in a quick low voice—

"There is Miss Bertram!"

"Oh! I am so glad!" she cried, springing forward in mingled joy and amazement, and shaking back the hair from her face, as if to see Mr. Graham better—"I am so glad, Mr. Graham! Mrs. Graham said you were gone for good—I am sure it was that gave me a headache—and that you would NEVER come back!" remarked Miss Bertram, with strong emphasis on the word "never."

Edward Graham tried to be courteous and good-humoured, and to make a civil speech, but never had he found an interruption so vexatious as this.

"And are you going to stay?" asked Miss Bertram, sitting down on a garden-chair, with the evident intention of remaining where she was.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to stay for some

time, at least; then he suddenly remembered that he was late, and could not wait any longer for his aunt, and so he took his leave, to Miss Bertram's evident chagrin.

"I wish he had stayed," she said, plaintively, following the fugitive with a reproachful glance.

"Why, Lily, how partial you are to Mr. Graham," gaily remarked Miss Scot, who felt buoyantly happy just then, and who moreover rather enjoyed the discomfiture of her lover.

"Oh! I don't care so much about him," replied Lily Bertram, a little affronted at the imputation; "but one never sees anyone now, and that is dull."

"So you only care about Mr. Graham because you can have no one else," remarked Lily Scot, rather piqued.

"Yes," answered Miss Bertram, with perfect candour, "that is it. I like new faces, and he is the last new face, you know."

"How flattering to Mr. Graham!" shortly said Miss Scot.

"Oh! but you will not tell him," cried Lily Bertram, alarmed; "pray do not tell him, Lily."

"And why should *I* tell him?" asked Miss Scot, dignified.

Did that personal pronoun "I" say too much?—had something or other wakened a vague suspicion in shrewd little Miss Bertram which Miss Scot's imprudently grave manner turned into certainty? There is no telling; but everyone knows that there are no little girls in certain matters. In a moment Miss Bertram knew it all, and jumping up and clapping her hands, she cried, in an ecstasy of delight, "Oh! I know, I know; and, Lily dear, I shall be bridesmaid!" throwing her arms around Miss Scot's neck as she said it; "and, oh!" with sudden and expressive dismay, "you will never tell him that I do not care so much about him, because it is not true, you know; and I only said it because he went away, so promise you will never tell him; and, oh! Lily, when is it to be?"

Miss Scot tried to protest, to deny, or at least to imply denial, but for once she was defeated. The vehemence of Miss Bertram was a torrent which swept away every pebble, every brier from its path, and so within half an hour of its having been uttered, Mr. Graham's great secret was in the possession of Lily Bertram, and all

that Miss Scot could do was to swear her young *confidante* to inviolable secresy.

It is but fair to declare that Miss Bertram fully intended to keep her promise, and to bury Miss Scot's involuntary confidence in the deepest recesses of her memory; but the same ill-luck which had revealed to her Mr. Graham's suit and its success, betrayed her knowledge of both to another person.

Miss Scot managed to get rid of her young companion, as soon as she civilly could, by pleading that she wanted to go up to her room, a sanctum which none ever invaded; but not for this could Lily Bertram make up her mind to go back to her own home. She loitered about the garden, exulting at her cleverness in guessing the truth, and hugging herself in the ownership of a secret so momentous as that now in her possession. "And no one but myself knows anything about it," proudly thought Miss Bertram.

"I thought Miss Scot was with you, Miss," said the voice of Sarah, who suddenly appeared on the scene.

"Miss Scot is gone up to her room," replied

Lily Bertram, seriously. Even Sarah knew nothing about it.

The nurse gave her a sharp look. It was not Miss Scot's hour for going up to her room, and Sarah, to say the truth, had seen Mr. Graham leave the house abruptly some ten minutes before, and felt inquisitive. Now Sarah no more than anyone else invaded Miss Scot's privacy, so she looked vexed, and said,

"Miss Scot's wanted."

Lily Bertram pursed up her lips.

"Who wants her?" she asked.

"Some one who has a right, Miss," tartly replied Sarah.

"Is it Mr. Graham?" inquired Miss Bertram, eagerly; "because if it's Mr. Graham, perhaps Miss Scot would come down."

The gipsy face of Sarah took a peculiar meaning.

"Ah! Miss," she said, "they tell you everything, I see."

"No, they don't!" cried Miss Bertram, alarmed, "and I know nothing, nurse—nothing, indeed." Here she paused, and became very red, for if Lily Bertram had faults, to tell deliberate untruths was not one of them, and this asseve-

ration that she knew nothing died on her lips, and left her in a state of miserable confusion.

Sarah was far too clever and too shrewd to force the enemy's retrenchments.

"Well, well, those who want Miss Scot must find her," was all she said; and having found what she wanted and had come for, she went back to the house, wondering jealously why Miss Bertram was admitted to a confidence from which she was excluded.

But where is the use of a secret in such matters, and especially in a place like Saint Aubin? Of coursé Miss Scot told her mother, who said at once,

"I am so glad, my dear child; but we must keep it very quiet."

"Yes, mamma dear," answered Lily, very sweetly, "and I think we must not tell Mrs. Petherick.

"Mrs. Petherick!" almost screamed Mrs. Scot—"I wonder you could think of such a thing? Do you want it to be over all Saint Aubin before night? Mrs. Petherick, indeed!"

Luckily for Lily Scot's secret, Mrs. Petherick did not come in that day, and put Mrs. Scot's constancy to the proof. But what possessed

Captain Jekyll to drop in that afternoon?—by what unfortunate chance did he find Mrs. Scot alone?—and owing to what perverse spirit was it that he spoke so tenderly of the fair Lily Scot, lamenting with some pathos that she should waste so long "her sweetness on the desert air?"

"Now that is good," said Mrs. Scot, with a laugh and a sniff of indignation. "I wonder that you, Captain Jekyll——But then," she added, correcting herself, and looking at him with mild pity, "how should you know?"

The Captain laid his finger to his nose, and rolled his goggle eyes.

"Ah! ah!" he chuckled—"all under the rose. I see—I understand—very good; only don't tell Mrs. Petherick, unless you wish to have it pretty widely known."

Mrs. Scot protested she did not understand Captain Jekyll's meaning, and Captain Jekyll, protesting that it was capital—on his word it was—took his leave, and rushing off from house to house, told everyone that Lily Scot was engaged to "that young Graham, you know, but that it was not to get into the Petherick Gazette, you know." Thanks to which kind

recommendation, Mrs. Petherick had learned the news from five different persons before she sat down to take her tea that evening. But of this outward result Mrs. Scot and her family were blissfully ignorant, and remained innocently persuaded that Saint Aubin knew nothing about their concerns.

Mrs. Graham was much affected when she learned her nephew's double victory.

"My dear boy," she said, "I do not know which I like best—that you should build that turret, or marry Lily, who is the dearest girl. I only wish Mr. Bertram had made up his mind earlier, and then I should have enjoyed the treat."

The only miserable person was Lily Bertram; she felt overwhelmed with confusion and remorse at her involuntary treason, little suspecting that Miss Scot's trousseau, and the day of her wedding, were already openly discussed in every English family domiciled in Saint Aubin.

"How shall I look in her face?" thought Miss Bertram, who had suddenly fled home to her own room, and yet the fascination of danger took her back the same evening to Mrs. Scot's house. She found the family gathered

in the usual sitting-room, and Mr. Graham with them. Mrs. Graham looked bright as the day in her chair, and Mrs. Scot lazily content on her sofa. There was not much in that; the change was in Miss Scot. Instead of sitting between her two little sisters, superintending their work, and busily stitching herself, Miss Scot, though presiding as usual at her own little table, was alone there with Mr. Graham; both were bending forward. Mr. Graham seemed to be drawing something, and Miss Scot to be looking at his work. Neither moved on the entrance of Miss Bertram, who, indeed, was accustomed to run in and out of Mrs. Scot's house as free and as unheeded as a kitten. She went and sat by Jane and Louisa, who were unusually prim and self-possessed, and declined to talk about the treat. Mr. Graham and Miss Scot were conversing in a soft under-key, and fragments of their discourse reached Miss Bertram's attentive ear.

"So those are the windows," said Miss Scot. "I like them—they are very pretty."

She looked down at his drawing with soft, serious eyes, and he looked with involuntary tenderness in her face. She was his, and of all

possessions dear to a young man's heart there is surely none so dear as that of his first love.

"Windows!—what windows!" whispered Miss Bertram to Jane.

"Hush!" replied that young lady, rather austerely, and with an evident imitation of Lily Scot's manner.

Louisa was much amused at Miss Bertram's stare of surprise, and leaned back in her chair in a fit of suppressed laughter Jane condescended to smile, but the smile too was a Lily-Scot smile—sweet, serious, and reticent. Miss Bertram reddened up to the roots of her hair.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, a little indignantly. "I said what windows. There is nothing ridiculous in that, is there?"

"My dear," softly said Miss Scot, looking up; and Miss Bertram at once calmed down, and blushing with some little confusion at her warmth of temper, bent over the roses of her worsted work.

"No one means any harm," said Jane, still gently grave and amiable; "but of course you do not understand."

"But I do understand," said Miss Bertram, in her vexation; "only I thought it was such a secret!"

"What's a secret?" asked Mrs. Graham, with her brightest smile.

No one answered, but after that what secret could there be?

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS was how Mr. Graham became a permanent resident in the old Norman inn, above the entrance gate of which the two travellers were ever going on towards Jerusalem—one faint and weary, the other full of strong hope and fervent desire. He took Mrs. Graham back to London, settled some matters there, then returned alone to Saint Aubin, to carry on his double fortunes—to make love to Lily Scot, and to build Mr. Bertram's turret. He felt very happy. His first love and his first venture combined to make life fair in his eyes; and then everything went on so smoothly. Lily was perfection, of course, and the turret promised to be a success in every sense of the word.

Mr. Bertram had agreed to give thirty thousand francs; Mr. Lennard had promised twenty

thousand for his ward, and Jean Merle had bound himself to build the turret under Mr. Graham's directions for forty thousand. Ten thousand francs, four hundred pounds sterling, remained to the young man—four hundred pounds and the honour of the thing! To a great, successful architect this would have been nothing, to Edward Graham it was, if not a fortune, at least the promise of one.

Everything, as we said, went on smoothly, but Edward Graham worked as hard as if his path were beset with obstacles. According to the terms of their agreement Monsieur Merle, the builder, was responsible for all, but according to the same agreement, the young architect was to have a perpetual right of interference.

"Monsieur might have trusted me," said Jean Merle, his honest blue eyes kindling with wounded pride; "but I am not afraid of being found fault with," he added, with a little defiant laugh.

"You must not mind it, Monsieur Merle," said the young man, soothingly; "this is my first great task, I must see to everything. I will have no personal dealings with either Maître Jacques Cœur, or Maître Louis Renaud,

or, unless when I cannot help it, with your men, but still I must see to everything."

But Monsieur Merle persisted in saying that he might have been trusted, and that he had no fear, and though somewhat affronted at first, he recovered his equanimity after a time, and got on beautifully with his young employer. Edward Graham worked hard, as we said, but he had a frame of iron—he could bear it; never indeed had he felt in more vigorous health or in mood more buoyant. He rose with dawn and went to bed at midnight; he took nothing on trust, neither stone, nor wood, nor work; for Mr. Graham was no experienced successful architect, who could leave all to subordinates, and reap the reward of their toil. He felt anxious and responsible, and when carpenter, builder, and mason rested, he still laboured on. His soul was in his task, and he had set his heart, not merely on success and fame, but on work well done. If the Romans were cruel, stern, and unpoetic—if they ravaged lands, and subdued nations without ruth, and never paused or relented in their work of death—if they plundered and enslaved races more gifted than their own, and poured forth the blood of cap-

tives, or rejoiced in their tortures in more than a thousand arenas, yet one praise their most bitter foes cannot deny them—their work was always great work, and when they built, they built for eternity. And the gift still clings to their blood. Though the Romans have little left to build—though they have palaces, churches, and basilicas enough for the world—they have not lost the skill of their ancestors, and they are still first in the art of hewing stones and raising great and solid stone-work.

Something of that hereditary excellence and tendency Mr. Graham had. He loved good work, and he knew how to secure it. Solidity, truth, and honesty characterized this, his first great undertaking. He spared no pains of his own to accomplish his purpose; his days were devoted to it, his thoughts, waking and sleeping, were in it; he lived, thought, studied, and read for that; and only in the evening, when he went in to Mrs. Scot's, did he allow himself an hour's repose. But then it was a delicious hour. To sit and look at Lily, so neat, so dainty, and so fair, was in itself a delightful reward. To look up at fruit ripening on another man's tree is poor comfort to the thirsty

wayfarer, but to see that fair fruit, and to know that the day is coming when you can stretch out your hand and pluck it, is quite another thing. Lily Scot was Mr. Graham's reward; she was the prize of victory, the fair and tender recompense of all his toil. He could not watch her charming ways, her gentle and serious grace—he could not meet her soft dark eyes, and not feel with tender complacency, "All this is, or will be, mine." They were to be married when the turret was completed. Mr. Graham had gone over his calculations again and again, and he had felt authorized to begin a new life, with Lily Scot for his partner. He would not have much money, but the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold was a classical house. There was not an architect of note in France, scarcely in Europe, who had not heard of it. With that house the name of Edward Graham was now linked, and he felt confident that it would prove the stepping-stone to fame, and to lucrative work too. He knew that his labours were watched, praised, and criticized in more than one great city. He had the doubtful satisfaction of reading a sharp comment on his undertaking in an English periodical well

known to men of his profession. "Why did Mr. Graham do this, and why did not Mr. Graham do that?" was the substance of the article. "But after all, it brings a man before the public, you know," said Mr. Edward Graham to Lily Scot, who was gently indignant with the anonymous censor. "It was so ill-natured," said this little innocent. As if good or ill-nature had anything to do with favourable or adverse criticism! "It brings a man before the public," persisted Edward Graham, who was not over-sensitive, and who also knew the value of being remembered *quand même*. Praise would have been better than blame, but blame was better than silence, and praise he had from men who had a right to give it. He knew that Sir Edmund Shrievewell, that great architect, on whose table he had first seen De Renneville's book, had stepped out of his way to give a look at him and his labours in Saint Aubin. Sir Edmund Shrievewell had been very kind indeed—a little condescending, but still very kind. He had praised and criticized, and given a suggestion here and there, and then gone his way, and before going, informed Mr. Bertram that his architect was a young man of spirit

and promise, with plenty of the right sort of stuff in him. Little Miss Bertram had heard this, as she heard everything, and rushed off in hot haste to tell Lily Scot, who, beaming with modest pride, had told her mother, who had told all Saint Aubin that Sir Edmund Shrievewell had remained "positively astounded on seeing Mr. Graham's work, and declared with a round oath—it is very shocking of Sir Edmund to swear, but men will swear, my dear Mrs. Petherick—that he could not have done it better."

"Traduttore, traditore," says the Italian proverb, a saying which seems to hold good with speeches repeated as well as with books translated. Mrs. Scot's version was received as gospel truth in Saint Aubin, where Mr. Graham became a lion, after a fashion. Many people thought him cold, disagreeable, and haughty, but the English colony was proud of him, and the natives admired him prodigiously, on the word of all who had dealings with him. Maître Jacques Cœur and Maître Louis Renaud did not know which to praise him for most, his talent or his sharpness; and Monsieur Jean Merle said that of all honourable, just men that he had

dealt with, none surpassed Mr. Graham. Monsieur Duhamel and Gentil agreed for once to declare that time would show; but who cared for their verdict. "All jealousy, my dear!" as Mrs. Scot said.

If the young man would have gone into Saint Aubin society, he could have done so, for it was ready to receive him with open arms; but he had no leisure for its embraces. He spent some of his time at Mrs. Scot's, as a matter of course, and he was welcomed and hospitably entertained; but only now and then, in a formal way, at Mr. Bertram's; and he also called occasionally on Mr. Lennard; but this was all, for, as we said, Mr. Graham had really no time to spare. The Winter had been so fine that the weather had given him no leisure, and now Winter being nearly over, and Spring at hand, he could look forward to the completion of his task for the end of Summer; by that time, too, he could be spending his honeymoon on the lakes, and bringing home the fair Lily, Lily Scot no longer, to a home of her own. All this was very pleasant, and though Edward Graham took it perhaps too much as a matter of course that his path should be smooth, and that mat-

ters should go on well with him, he was also conscious that his lines had been cast in pleasant places, and he enjoyed the present time as a young man of twenty-five may enjoy his first success and his first love. Perhaps he was not sufficiently on his guard against the possibility of unpleasantness. When it came he received it equably enough in appearance, but in reality he felt as disagreeably surprised as though a check had ever been out of the question.

As a matter of courtesy and policy, Edward Graham called every now and then on Mr. Lennard, and reported to him the progress of his task. To be sure Mr. Lennard, who came and looked at the building several times a week, knew all about it, but Mr. Graham had tact enough to feel that he must not rely upon these flying visits, and that Mr. Lennard, without whose consent he could have done nothing, could not be treated with politeness too scrupulous or too exact.

One fine morning in March, when he happened to have really nothing to do, Edward Graham accordingly called on Miss Bertram's *tuteur*. His house in the Haute-ville was next Mr. Bertram's. It was an old house, with an arched

gateway, a broad court, and a straight, formal garden behind. In that garden Edward Graham found Mr. Lennard, standing still in the sun, and staring straight before him with his hands in his pockets.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham," he said, rather formally; "glad to see you." And he gave him a finger.

Edward Graham was quick to feel the coolness of his reception. At once his keen eyes were on Mr. Lennard's face, reading it shrewdly; but that cool, dry, worldly face rarely told its meaning, and the young man was baffled.

"It cannot be anything about my work or me," he thought anxiously.

"And how are we getting on, Mr. Graham?" asked Mr. Lennard, nodding in the direction of Mr. Bertram's house. "All right there, I suppose?"

"I hope so," was the quiet answer.

"Don't hope—be sure. By-the-by, I looked in yesterday, as they told you."

But no one had told Mr. Graham, and he said so.

"Not worth while," drily said Mr. Lennard. "Well, I am glad you looked in—I had some-

thing to say, Mr. Graham—about that staircase, you know."

"The staircase is all right, I hope," said Mr. Graham.

"Oh! you mean your staircase—I mean the old one—not found it out yet, eh?"

And Mr. Lennard winked at him with his little keen, grey eye, and looked shrewd, and, Edward Graham thought, rather vicious. Slowly and cautiously he asked what old staircase Mr. Lennard meant. Mr. Lennard laughed, shut his eyes, and laughed again.

"Now that's a joke!" he said at length—"an architect, and not to find out that there was a staircase once on a time between the main building and the turret that is gone. I do call that a joke, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham reddened, but he kept his temper, and so composedly asked for an explanation that Mr. Lennard, notwithstanding his exquisite sense of that joke, gave it at length. There had been a staircase leading from the house to the turret—it was gone, but traces of it must exist, and Mr. Lennard suggested that Mr. Graham should search for them, and having found them adapt his staircase "to the original

thing—much the best plan, you may be sure," added Mr. Lennard, with a knowing wink.

This advice, which might have been good or bad, or simply indifferent in the beginning, was so preposterous at this eleventh hour, that Mr. Graham required all his self-command not to treat it with contempt, but he answered quietly enough,

"There was a staircase, of course. I have found no traces of it, and now it is too late to take it into account."

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Lennard, raising his eyebrows.

"I really do," said Edward Graham, trying to laugh, "for I have managed my staircase without it, Mr. Lennard."

"Then depend upon it you are all wrong," said Mr. Lennard, confidentially.

Mr. Graham bit his lip.

"Perhaps you would not mind looking out for that old staircase, just to see," amiably continued Mr. Lennard. "I should like it, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham bowed rather stiffly, and spoke of other things, and Mr. Lennard dropped the staircase, and was pleasant enough after a

fashion, but the young man left him with a thorn of vexation at his heart. What did Mr. Lennard mean by that staircase?—what could he mean by anything so absurd? The man was crotchetty, but no fool. What could he mean? To annoy him! Why so? Mr. Graham had always treated Mr Lennard with deference, and listened to his suggestions with attention and courtesy. Why should he all at once have become so perverse, not to say foolish?

And yet foolish and perverse though that man was, he must be minded; much lay with him, and he could be troublesome if he chose. This is one of the vexations of life, that the narrow, the silly, and the mean among the lookers-on so often have power to wear out the hearts of the earnest and the brave amongst the doers, of the men and women who, whatever their sphere and their task may be, only ask to do their work, and to be allowed to do it well.

Instead of the half-holiday, with Lily Scot's society, of course, in which Mr. Graham had meant to indulge, he now took a stroll up the street, fretting over the vexatious interference.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, do come in," suddenly

said a light young voice, which Mr. Graham knew but too well. It was impossible to feign deafness; and, though unwillingly enough, he paused. Lily Bertram's rosy face was peeping out at him from the ground-floor window of the Asile, and her little brown hand was beckoning him within. "I want you to see the house and the old people and Sister Martha," said Lily, with some gravity; "you have time to-day, you know, so do come in, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham had a great mind to resist, but on second thoughts it seemed wiser to yield. The door stood open; he crossed the threshold; in a moment Lily was by his side.

"This way," she said breathlessly. She led him down the broad path to the little green garden, where the old men were sitting on the sunlit benches. The scene scarcely seemed to have changed since the last Autumn, when Edward Graham had caught a glimpse of it in passing by. Some old men had dropped away, but others had come in to fill their vacant places, and the only essential difference was that of which Lily at once made him aware—"Poor Sister Martha no longer goes out collecting," she said; "and so I must bring her what I give her; and yet she says she is *so* happy."

The sister, who was standing by, turned her fresh happy face, and said good-humouredly,

"Why, of course I am happy, Mademoiselle. Have I not the good God and the old people? What more can a little sister want?"

"But *I* should be miserable," cried Lily, "for the old people must be cross sometimes."

Sister Martha laughed.

"They are very good," said she; "but how could you be happy in our life, since you are not meant for it? You do not suppose that we do anything wonderful?" she added, raising her eyebrows in amused surprise at the suggestion—"not a bit. We do it because we are meant to do it. It gives us no trouble, and costs us so little that we are quite amazed at the fuss some people make with us. Why, we would not change lots with the Empress!" cried Sister Martha, with a merry laugh.

"Ah! but it must be so dull to be always doing the same thing," added Lily, whose face grew long at the thought.

"Kings and queens are always doing the same thing," shrewdly answered Sister Martha, "and they like it. Soldiers and sailors, and men in business, and lawyers, and doctors,

and fine ladies and gentlemen, are always doing the same thing, and everyone of them likes it."

"Well," remarked Lily, looking impressed, "I daresay you are right, Sister Martha; birds are always hopping, or flying, or singing; and the wind is always whistling, and blowing, and going about; and the sun is always rising and setting, and I suppose they all like it."

"Of course they do," said Sister Martha composedly, "and that because they are all doing what they are meant to do."

"That woman is a philosopher," thought Edward Graham, who had been listening to her attentively; and when she turned to him, and civilly asked if he wished to see the house, he assented, not so much to look at a few old men and women as to draw Sister Martha out a little more. But the little Sister's philosophy was more practical than spoken. She rarely put it into words, no doubt thinking that to do, not to talk, was what she was meant for. When Edward Graham gently hinted at all she and the other little Sisters had to bear, she only laughed gaily, and replied—

"But everyone has got something to bear,

Monsieur, and we really have not more than other people."

This was all the wisdom the young man could extract from her, yet when he parted from Sister Martha, and left her during an opportune moment, when Lily Bertram was deeply engaged in talking to an old man, he felt all the better for this glimpse of a life so self-denying, so austere, and yet so cheerful.

"Can I not do what a simple peasant-girl does?" he argued to himself—"can I not go through what I am meant to do, and bear with its vexations? Indeed, with God's help, I will!"

In this mood he went at once to Mr. Bertram's house to inquire about the missing staircase there. He met Mr. Bertram in the court on the point of going out.

"Good morning, Mr. Graham," he said graciously. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you to-day, and of telling you how well I think everything is going on—admirably, I may say. I hope you are satisfied."

Mr. Graham looked at his work. The workmen had gone to take their noonday meal, and the unfinished turret rose, with its scaffolding

around it, on a background of blue air. It was white and silent, and unadorned as yet by the Gothic carving which was to make it match with the rest of the building; but it was very fair in Mr. Graham's eyes, and it was honestly that he answered,

"I have no reason to complain, Mr. Bertram, but Mr. Lennard wishes me to look for traces of the staircase which existed in the turret we are rebuilding. I suppose they can be found in the house."

Mr. Bertram raised his handsome eyebrows in supercilious surprise.

"Absurd!" he murmured, with a smile of mild contempt—"quite absurd. I know of no such traces, and cannot imagine what we want with them. Mr. Lennard is a worthy man; I have great regard for him, but he is getting too absurd, you know."

"Then it is useless for me to look," said Edward Graham, rather gravely.

"Oh, you may look, Mr. Graham," replied Mr. Bertram, with amiable condescension. "I remember now to have heard about something of the kind long ago, but I can give you no assistance. Good morning, Mr. Graham. I am

really sorry Mr. Lennard should be so absurd, but you may look."

And with a graceful wave of his hand, and a flash of the diamond ring, Mr. Bertram was gone.

Thus authorized, Mr. Graham entered the house and began his search. The drawing-room, the rooms next it, were examined in vain. At length Mr. Graham came to the door of a closet, which he opened with impatient haste. It was quite dark, but a lighted candle was soon got, and showed him that it was filled with lumber. Files of newspapers lay piled on shelves; furniture broken or disused filled one corner; dingy pictures in tarnished frames stood with their faces to the wall. All these cast-off worldly goods Mr. Graham moved, and put back with his own hands—in vain, he found no token of the staircase. Cobwebs in his hair, and, for all he knew, spiders, and dust on his hands, were the only reward of his pains.

"Vexatious!" he thought, putting back the last picture in its place against the wall, and turning away. But as the light from the candle in his hand flashed across the face of the portrait, for it was one, he turned back hastily,

gave the whole picture a rapid look, then stood spell-bound, gazing at a beautiful woman in all the prime of her beauty and the bloom of her youth, who looked back at him with proud, laughing dark eyes. She wore over her bright, brown hair an old-fashioned, but becoming cap of dainty lace, with a little rakish tricolour set in it on one side. Long gold earrings, such as Norman fisherwomen still wear, fell down to her neck; a narrow black velvet riband clasped her white throat, a gold heart and cross pendant from it rested on her breast of snow. Through a lace *fichu* folded across her bosom, and fastened at the waist by a broad tricolour sash, gleamed her round white shoulders—shoulders so perfect in form and colour that Edward Graham had never seen any like them; and everything in her, from her lustrous eyes to her rosy lips, seemed to say, "Look at me, for I am beautiful!" And Mr. Graham did look, intoxicated, ravished.

Who shall deny thy power, immortal beauty, when we see thee thus rule men's hearts from beyond the grave. The painting was a fine one—there was light in those eyes, those lips breathed, and that warm flesh was living; but

would Mr. Graham have looked at this picture so long, keen though his love and appreciation of fine paintings were, if the image it showed him had not been so lovely?

Oh! rich brown hair, curling round an ivory brow, eyes of dark lustre shining from beneath fine-pencilled eyebrows, exquisite lips and dainty dimpled chin, cheeks like the rose and matchless neck and shoulders, how could this young man look at you and not forget for a moment that you had long been dust? But he remembered it at length, and with the remembrance came the wish of knowing what painter had wrought an image so rare. He stopped to read the name at the bottom of the picture.

"It's by David," said Miss Bertram's clear young voice behind him.

Mr. Graham turned round rather annoyed, to find that Miss Bertram had, as usual, discovered his whereabouts. She continued, eager and willing, to inform him, as was her wont:

"Perhaps you have not heard of David, Mr. Graham?"

"I have heard of a David who was an author," replied Mr. Graham, amused, in spite of himself—"he wrote a book of psalms, I believe.

He was also a king, and had a harp—at least, I have been told so."

Lily reddened. She saw that Mr. Graham was "making fun of her," to use her own words. She also had a strong suspicion that he might not need the information she was anxious to give, but that insatiable love of talking which was her great infirmity would not let her be silent.

"The David I mean," said she, "was a great French painter. He was such a monster; he voted the death of Louis XVI., was the friend of Robespierre and Marat," added Lily, with a shudder, "but he was a great painter."

"Yes, he voted the death of Louis XVI., and painted the coronation of Napoleon," said Mr. Graham, with quiet scorn. "I have heard of the man, but he was a fine painter too, though scarcely the one for this lovely creature to sit to. May I ask who she was, Miss Lily?"

"Don't you know?" exclaimed Lily, nettled to find that she never could tell Mr. Graham something he did not know already. "I thought you knew everything, Mr. Graham."

"I deplore to say it—there are blanks in my knowledge, though, as you have already dis-

covered, it is of the most extensive kind—indeed quite overpowers me at times—and one of these blanks is my ignorance of this lovely lady's name."

"She was my French great-grandmother," answered Lily, pacified. "David painted her portrait, and wanted to marry her as well; but she was a fisherman's daughter, and became a fisherman's wife. Poor great-grandmamma! it was no fault of hers if she was not a Bertram, was it, Mr. Graham? But papa will keep her in here, and will not hang her up, all on account of that tricolour cockade and sash; for it seems she was very, very Republican. They called her *la belle patriote*, and she was beautiful, was she not? Papa says that her face is too round, that her mouth is too large, and her nose too short; but oh! I do think her so lovely, Mr. Graham. And you must not think that because she was a Republican, and wore tricolour sashes and cockades, she was like David, and would have voted the death of Louis XVI. I am sure she would not," added Lily warmly.

All that Mr. Graham gathered from this account of *la belle patriote* was that Mr. Bertram was ashamed of his late wife's plebeian ances-

tress, and that he therefore quarrelled with her beauty as well as with that wicked little cockade in her cap. But a second look at the portrait, before which he still stood, with the light in his hand, showed him that the fastidious English gentleman's criticisms were correct in the main. That enchanting face, so fresh, so bright, so fair, was not faultless, after all, and Mr. Graham was surprised not to have discovered this sooner—surprised to find that those dark eyes and that lovely bloom had so far dazzled his correct and critical eye.

"And had this lady no story?" asked Mr. Graham, after a pause.

"Everyone has got a story," gravely replied Lily, "and she had hers. Her young husband was lost at sea; his boat was run into on a dark night by a trading vessel, and he was drowned with his two brothers, and no one ever knew anything about it, till the captain of the trading vessel was on his death-bed—for he had sworn his men not to tell—but his conscience pricked him then, and he sent five hundred francs to each of the three widows; and what do you think my great-grandmother said, and she was very poor, Mr. Graham—'Keep

your money,' she said. '*J'veux m'n homme*—I want my man,'" added Lily, translating the words for Mr. Graham's benefit, "for you know no woman in that class ever says 'my husband.'"

Mr. Graham always shunned Lily's society. She was a child, a great talker, and however he managed, she made him lose time; but Mr. Bertram's daughter, who was also the little mistress of the house he was re-building, could not be avoided too openly, and had to be endured occasionally. Besides, though Mr. Graham did not want Lily, he had a sort of liking for her. She was a warm-hearted little thing; she adored Lily Scot, and she was clever and amusing enough now and then. So he now heard her out patiently, smiled at her little story of her ancestress, and ended by putting a question concerning the staircase.

"A staircase!" echoed Lily, looking wise—"why, Mr. Graham, how can there be a staircase when the turret is gone?"

"Mr. Lennard says there are traces of one, Miss Bertram."

To his surprise, Lily coloured up, and looked almost ready to cry.

"Mr. Lennard is getting very tiresome," she said; "he worries poor papa to death about that hedge, and now he wants to worry you about my turret."

Mr. Graham felt unpleasantly surprised at this intimation of a disagreement between Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard. Might it not end by affecting him and his work in the end? Was this sudden and perverse suggestion of the defunct staircase the penalty which he must pay for the difference of the two friends?

"Poor godpapa!" resumed Lily, calming down—"he cannot help it. He has the gout, you know; and papa says we must not mind."

She looked up with her clear brown eyes, so frank and true, in Mr. Graham's face, to find some comfort there; but he only smiled gravely, and, locking the closet door, left the room, followed by Lily.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she said, as they entered the drawing-room together, and forgetting all her trouble in a moment, "I have been reading such a funny story this morning."

"Have you, Miss Bertram?" he replied, feeling the coming peril, but not knowing how to shun it.

"Yes; shall I tell it to you?" said Lily, with her usual liberality, and her eyes sparkling at the delightful prospect of hearing her own voice a little longer.

But Mr. Graham, ungrateful man, hastened to reply as he moved towards the stairs,

"Thank you, Miss Lily, I am sure it is a delightful story, but unluckily I have no time to hear it now."

He opened the door as he spoke.

"It is a very short story," cried Lily, following her victim, and naturally anxious to prevent him from escaping; "it would not take me five minutes to tell."

But Mr. Graham was already downstairs, crossing the court at a pace which made pursuit hopeless. Lily looked blankly after him, but though annoyed at having to keep in her story, she forgot him before he was fairly out of sight. Oh! fickle Lily, for the sake of a white pigeon who came and alighted on the open window. Breathless with delight and with admiration, Lily stood still, watching her visitor as he strutted along the stone ledge cooing at her, so at least Lily thought. But this bird, like other birds of his feather, seemingly meant nothing

by his cooing, for when Lily ventured to draw a step nearer to him, he opened his white wings and flew away.

"How ungrateful!" indignantly thought Lily, looking out of the window after him, and as she did so, oh! joy of joys, there was Mr. Graham, imprudent man, who stood in the court below in the sunshine.

"I daresay I can go down and tell him the story now," thought Lily.

She was not without a dim consciousness that Mr. Graham might not care to hear the story; but, like all talkers, she overlooked this trifling consideration in the gratification of her ruling passion, so, before Mr. Graham could even think of escape, Lily, eternal Lily, was once more at his elbow.

"I think," said Lily, point-blank, "that I had better tell you the story now, Mr. Graham—I mean I had better not wait till this evening."

Mr. Graham groaned in the spirit, and gloomy resignation appeared in his face, but he submitted.

"Tell away," he answered. "I think you said it was a funny story."

"Oh! so funny," cried Lily, chuckling at the remembrance.

"Then it is wasted upon me. Neither at comic songs nor at funny stories do I ever laugh."

"But you must laugh at this," insisted Lily. "It is about Gibbon. You have heard about him, of course. Papa has got him in I don't know how many volumes. Well, you must know that he was a little fat man, and yet, would you believe it, he actually fell in love with a very pretty Madame de Crouzas. She became Madame de Montolieu later, and wrote such a pretty story—'Caroline de Lichtfeld.' Papa has got that too—would you like to read it?—shall I go and look for it for you?" cried Lily, her eyes sparkling at the thought of doing something that would please some one.

"Thanks—I have no time for novels," said Mr. Graham, arresting her with a gesture of his hand; "besides, I am dying to know what befalls the little fat Gibbon, who takes the egregious liberty of falling in love with that pretty Madame de Crouzas."

"Well, one day Gibbon calls on the lady. She was sitting so," said Lily, taking a garden-chair that stood there, and leaning back in it in a graceful attitude to dramatize the story,

"when all at once Gibbon throws himself on his knees at her feet, tells her he can't live without her, and all that. 'But you must, sir,' says the lady,"—here Lily frowned with some severity. "'Get up at once, sir, or I shall get quite angry.' Gibbon does not stir. 'Get up, if you please, sir,'" resumed Lily, looking a picture of offended decorum. "'Madame, I can't,' says poor Gibbon. 'You can't, sir!—well, then, I must ring the bell, and have you picked up.'" And Lily stretched out her hand, rang an imaginary bell, and said to an imaginary servant, "'Pick up Monsieur Gibbon.' Now, is not that a story!" cried Lily, bursting into one of her loud, clear, pealing laughs.

"There never was such a little actress," thought Mr. Graham, grave as a judge—"a cool young lady, too, telling love-stories to the first man she can lay hold of;" and anxious to mortify this indecorous young lady, he said aloud—"I told you I should not laugh at your story, Miss Lily."

"That's because you were not in it," promptly replied Lily, resuming her gravity. "I had a mind to ask you to kneel down and do Gibbon, but I fancied you would not; and yet it

would have been so much better," pathetically remarked Lily.

"Would it!" almost snorted Mr. Graham in his amazement and indignation at this vision of himself kneeling at Lily's feet. "You forget that I am not short and fat, Miss Lily."

"But since it would have been all make-believe!" exclaimed Lily, opening her eyes to the fullest extent, in evident surprise at his stupidity.

"I suppose it is innocence," he thought, after a pause; but whether Lily's forwardness were innocence or not, he felt the ungenerous desire of putting down her vanity as a story-teller.

"That story of yours is wretched stuff, Miss Lily," he said, taking the knife and cutting into the flesh with surgical want of mercy—"only fit for Joe Miller—indeed, rather too poor for him, in my opinion."

Dismay appeared on Lily's face; but she was a very acquiescent little soul in the main, for all she said was—

"Oh, dear! is it so bad as all that?—and I, who meant to tell it to everyone!"

"Don't, unless you want everyone to laugh at you, Miss Lily."

Lily, who had risen from her chair, and stood before Mr. Graham dancing on the tips of her toes, as was her wont, looked thoroughly disconcerted for one minute; then, rallying and brightening up with delightful rapidity, she said, with a quick, eager look up into Mr. Graham's face:

"Oh! but I have got another story, so much better than that. It is stupid, as you say; I shall tell it to you at once, and then you can tell me whether it is good or not; but it is rather long. I shall sit down."

Mr. Graham hastily looked at his watch.

"My dear Miss Lily," he said, "I must run away at once. Good morning."

"I shall go down the road with you," cried Lily, starting to her feet. "I can tell it as we walk along."

"I must run, Miss Lily," he said, hurrying out under the arched gateway.

"And I am so fond of running," cried Lily, in great glee; "you can't beat me at running, Mr. Graham."

"We shall see that," said Mr. Graham, exasperated by the persecution, and no more charmed at the prospect of running a race down the

open road with Miss Lily than of being seen doing Gibbon in a kneeling attitude at her feet in the sunny courtyard, with all the windows looking on.

"Ah! but start fair," said Lily, remonstratively, as they reached the gateway. "My shoe is down—wait a minute."

She stooped, but her slip-shod habits proved Lily's undoing. Whilst she was lifting up the heel of her shoe, Mr. Graham caught her up, put her within the gate, darted outside, and drew the gate after him all in a moment.

Lily felt too much exasperated to attempt to open the door and overtake him. Tears of passion rushed to her eyes, and she stamped in her rage.

"I shall never tell Mr. Graham a story again," she cried in her wrath—"never!"

Mr. Graham was too full of his own thoughts to care much for Miss Bertram's displeasure just then. He went straight to Mrs. Scot's house, in the hope of finding his Lily alone at that hour, which was that of her mother's nap. He was not disappointed. Lily was in the garden, busy with her flowers, over which she stooped so intent that she was not aware of his pre-

sence until he stood close to her. She then raised her flushed face with a pleased and surprised smile.

"How kind to leave your work!" she said, with happy, grateful eyes; "we did not expect you before this evening."

"I scarcely hoped for this little bit of liberty," he answered, forgetting his trouble as his look rested on her face. "I seldom see you by daylight, you know—except on Sundays."

"And this is Tuesday," she said pleasantly. "Mr. Lennard would have it that it was Wednesday, but——"

On hearing Mr. Lennard's name, Edward Graham gave a start, and with a sudden look of care he straight told Lily all that had passed this morning.

"And now, my darling," he added, by way of conclusion, "do tell me if you can what it means."

Lily, who had heard him with downcast eyes and a troubled face, looked up, and said with a sigh,

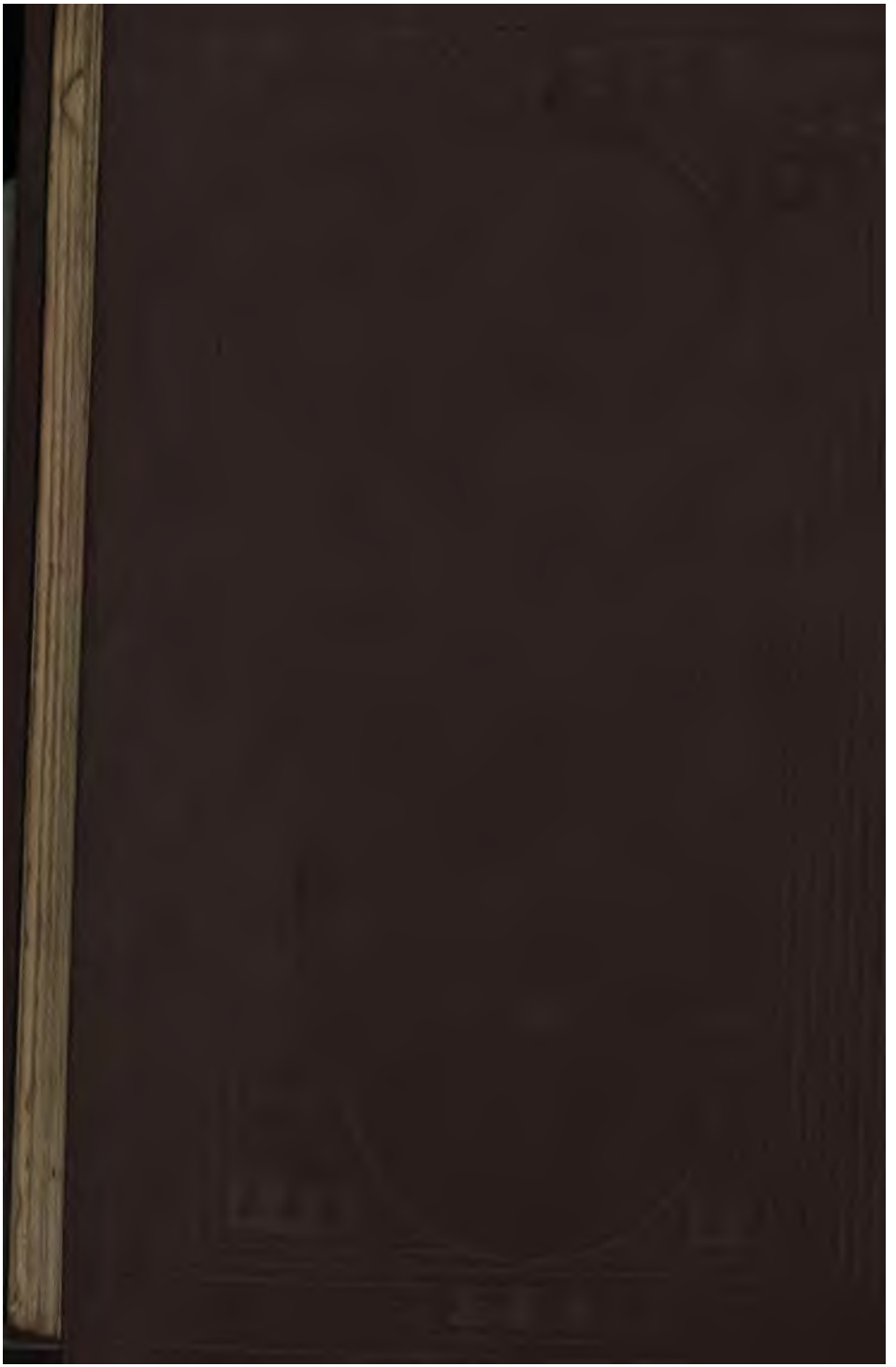
"I do not know. They have had many little differences, which have blown off, so will this, I hope—but I do not know."

Mr. Graham heard her gravely; he read doubt in her looks and accents, but he knit his brows, and tried to cheer her by saying, a little defiantly,

"Well, we need not care for that, you know, my darling. My business has nothing to do with the differences of Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard."

"Oh! no," she replied, smiling prettily; "how could it?" But in her heart she thought, "Who knows?"

And so they tried to cheat each other, and to make-believe that the serpent had not entered their little Eden.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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